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THE TRADITIONAL MORRIS MEN OF BAMPTON, OXON.
They are performing a handkerchief dance—"Maid of the Mill."

PEEPS AT ENGLISH FOLK-DANCES

BY

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A MEDIEVAL MAY DAY

The Vicar's Admonition.

Folk, each and all, enjoy this holyday ;
Gossips, be kindly, youths, in sport excel,
Maidens, be modest, e'en in mirth and play ;
Gaffers, be heedful of the black bottél,
  Lest in excess or ugly brawl
    Ye spend the hours not well.

And when the merrie merrie May is done,
When on Bel Hill the fires are seen to glow,
Maypole is up, and Morris is begun,
Beware, O foolish people, what ye do!
  Forget not blessed Aidan's name,
    To Holy Church be true.

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With plenty may our Saint the land endow,
Our cattle flourish, fatten, and increase,
Our children thrive, our wells with water flow ;
—I wish ye all prosperity and peace,
  A garner full of golden corn,
    Content that will not cease !

Agnes M. Alford.

Printed in Great Britain by
Billing and Sons, Ltd., Guildford and Esher

AUTHOR'S NOTE

NEARLY every English dance mentioned here is to be found with directions in Cecil Sharp's collections, "The Sword Dances of Northern England," "The Morris Book," and "The Country Dance Book," published by Messrs. Novello.

The variants of children's games are those which I have known from childhood, except "Rosy Apple," which is to be found with tune and directions in "Songtime," by Martin Shaw and Dr. Dearmer, published by Messrs. Curwen.

The Basque dances mentioned were collected by myself.

V. A.

CLEEVE,
August, 1923.

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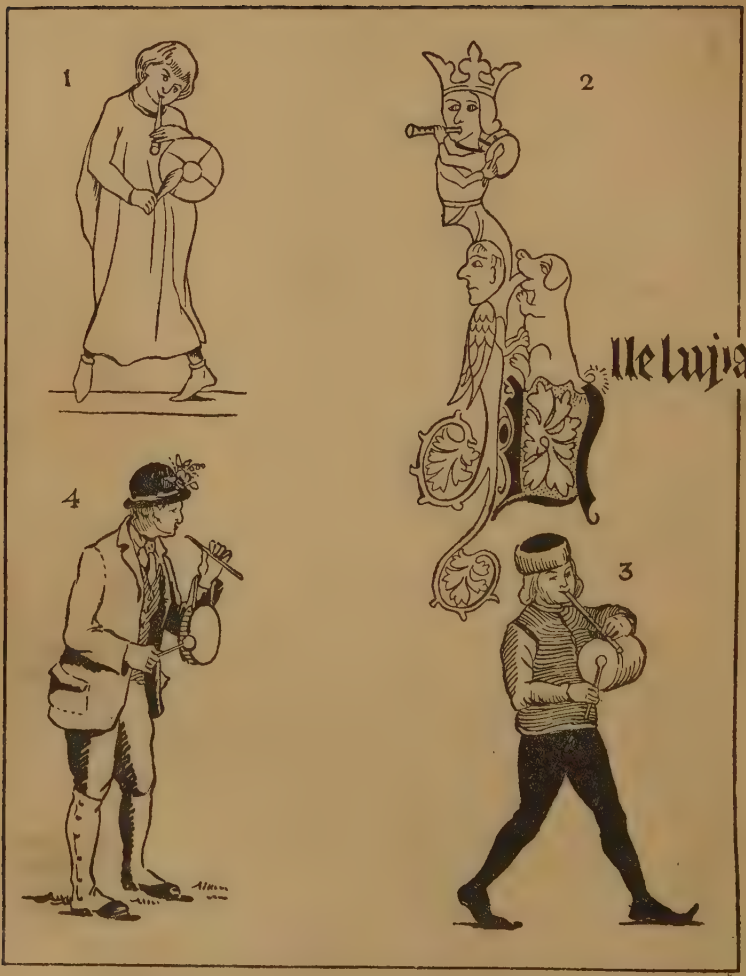

MUSICIANS PLAYING THE TRADITIONAL MORRIS INSTRUMENTS—THE PIPE AND TABOR.

1, Thirteenth century; 2, rourteenth century; 3, fifteenth century; 4, modern. No. 2 is from a Temporale (choir book) in Bristol Cathedral, and the top part shows the player of Pipe and Tabor; No. 3 shows the Tabor developing into a little drum; No. 4, It is interesting to compare the instruments used with those of the earlier players.

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PEEPS AT ENGLISH FOLK-DANCES

CHAPTER I

1. Jacob Hall's Jig.

One day I was sitting in an ancient school building, watching two lines of boys work through a dance. They were big tall boys, and they seemed to enjoy it very much, though their faces were grave. They danced with each other for lack of petticoated partners, and their feet in white tennis shoes thudded rhythmically on the old floor.

Suddenly a "cocksure" voice behind me announced contemptuously:

"That's a Swedish dance. We haven't got anything like that in England."

Well, the school building was English certainly—built late in the fourteen hundreds under an English mitred Abbot. The boys were English—born early in the nineteen hundreds, most of them with ordinary English fair heads and ordinary English blue eyes. The tune to which they stepped was English enough to set the feet of an English audience tapping—why then must the dance be foreign? It sounded English enough to pass unquestioned, one would have supposed, for the name of it was *Jacob Hall's Jig*. What made this

unseen lady so contemptuously repudiate it? Poor thing! She only did so because she was as ignorant as most English people are ignorant concerning their own music and dances. She was only saying what she had read and heard all her life.

You would like to know better, wouldn't you?

2. Hunger-Fear.

Once, long ago, men were horribly afraid in Winter. Food was the most precious of man's possessions, and food was hard to come by and almost impossible to store.

In the beginnings of agriculture sowing and reaping were most precarious jobs. Seed was sown in wretched little clearings of scratched-up earth, and it had to be guarded from birds and wild beasts and human enemies. When a village was attacked by quarrelsome neighbours the first thing to be spoiled were the crops outside the thorn-hedge. They were sure to be burnt and trampled down. Sometimes there was no seed left to sow, for it had all been eaten up before Spring came. One of the worst fears of frightened men was certainly the fear of seeing their scanty stores dwindle before a new supply was ripe. I think this deep-seated fear, come down to us through many, many generations of forefathers, is at the root of several queer things done by ourselves to-day—things which seem merely silly now.

We know this fundamental reason worked in primitive man because of these queer things still done by modern man—as though some indelible impression had been made and must still find an outlet—also because we see it working in the minds of uncivilised and child-

like people, people whom we call savages. But besides this we have it clearly written down for us in history. The ancient Greeks, for instance, had a ceremony every Spring, when they opened wide their doors and drove out a slave with blows, shouting "Out with Ox-hunger! In with wealth and health!"

Ox-hunger! A revolting word, but no doubt a true description of the pangs of Winter starvation. They drove out hunger and Winter in the person of the poor slave, and in with the Spring came health from good food and a new wealth of supplies. This tradition was kept up right into the great days of Greece—long after the people had lost all dread of Winter starvation. Yet the dread had made such an impression on the fore-fathers' minds that succeeding generations went on doing it. And in our English way *so do we.*

Indeed, it is quite possible that if this hunger-fear had not remorselessly pursued our ancestors during thousands of years, those schoolboys would not have been dancing *Jacob Hall's Jig* to entertain their visitors that afternoon.

Now, these queer things men do are like rags and tatters from a once whole cloak. We shall have to pick up a bit here and another bit there and piece them together. What is more difficult still is the joining together of two pieces that do not fit, or the necessity of unripping a bit of the cloak which has been sewn to an alien material—something that never belonged to the cloak at all. So it is essential to form some sort of picture of the whole cloak from which these odd bits and shreds have been torn, or we might not recognise them. Let us try.

3. The First Spring Processions.

We are in a sacred grove on the top of a hill. A great stone lies at the foot of an oak. The stone is hollowed at one edge into a lip to drain off what will presently wet its surface. (Remember we were what we call savages then.) A track through the great forest trees leads away to the village. This is hardly visible at the foot of the hill, so low are the roofs of the circular huts inside the thorny stockade. It is a bright May morning, but very cold.

The folk of the village approach their sacred spot as they have done every Spring for a thousand years, and as they will do for a thousand years more.

They come with a definite object, and each year that object is the same. They come first to awaken and then to propitiate the god of the earth, that mysterious and awful being who brings out the green leaves and causes the corn to push up in their poor little fields.

It is a very solemn occasion this Spring procession, for the god on the hilltop must be placated at all costs. Without his goodwill the sun will not shine, Winter will not go, there will be no food and the people will starve. So if he wants a sacrifice he shall have it.

Sometimes a little of that hard-won corn will suffice, for very early sacrifices seem to have been neither animal nor human. Sometimes a kid is necessary; and sometimes he clamours for human blood. Therefore, although the people make the occasion a festivity they also approach with dread.

Now comes a company of men strangely clad in the

skins and horns of beasts. They keep themselves apart mysteriously and no one asks their names. These are they who do the slaying for the village priest if he cannot manage it himself. We shall hear a great deal about disguises later; they are some of the ragged pieces of cloak which are so puzzling to fit together.

A cruel east wind blows. The god is evidently fast asleep. A blood sacrifice will assuredly be necessary. Will the priest cast his eyes on a human victim?

Sometimes a prisoner has been taken in a fight with another village, and is ready to hand all decked with garlands; sometimes one of their own village sons—very possibly the Chief's own son—must be given. So, you see, the slayers need be disguised if they are to lay hands on one of their own Princes.

The Chief, who would probably be the village priest as well, proceeds with the customary rite. We almost know his very words, for as late as 1553 these rites were still going on amongst not wholly converted Prussians in their northern forests, and were recorded in a letter by a Christian priest named Meletius. He says they were accustomed to offer sacrifice to the god of flowers, plants and all seeds. The sacrificing priest holds a dish full of beer and calls the god by name. Then he says this:

"Thou drivest away Winter; thou bringest back the pleasures of Spring; through thee the fields and gardens grow green; through thee the woods and groves get their leaves."

Then he drinks the beer and throws the dish backwards over his head. On this occasion the sacrifice is neither human, animal, nor cereal, but beer solemnly

drunk by the priest. But on the completion of the harvest we read that they sacrificed a goat. After both rites they feasted and danced. So we may well imagine the priest in the grove on the hilltop saying much the same. Then the villagers join in and leap and shout. Those dreadful disguised people flourish their killing weapons and leap high from the ground, thudding down upon the earth again. This is done with a distinct purpose. They wish to shake the earth and so arouse the bounties asleep within it; they seem to think that the crops will grow just as high as the devotees can jump, and they mean to force their dilatory god to get up and attend to business.

Do you remember how Elijah mocked the prophets of Baal?

"Cry aloud," he said. "Perchance he sleepeth and must be awakened!"

For Baal of the East was a sun god who made the vegetation grow, and every year his priests must awaken him, as Elijah well knew. And the counterpart of Baal was the god in the grove whom some people called Bel, and who has left his name scattered up and down old England on all the Bell hills, Bel Tors and Bellevers of the country.

Sometimes the King-priest—King because he is Chief of the community, priest because as headman he bears the burden of the ceremony and acts for the people—offers himself as victim. He knows that life needs constant renewal. He sees nature die only to live again each Spring. Perhaps he is getting old and feels the need of renewal. A younger man is obtaining influence, pushing into his place; so he will depart for a

time and come again young and strong like the vegetation in Spring.

These King-priests must have been terrible fellows, as much dreaded as any African witch-doctor. Often there was a confused idea that he was the god as well, or at least a representation of him, and that in his person the god himself must seek renewal in death and resurrection. We have many instances of this notion as far-spread as from ancient Mexico to the Pharaohs of Egypt. The easiest one for you to find is in the Bible. If you look at Ezekiel xxviii. you will see the Prince of Tyre was swollen-headed, and said, "I am god. I sit in the seat of god!" He probably imagined himself a representative of Baal, and I think many ancient, ignorant Kings thought likewise, and that that inflated notion was responsible for their tyrannical doings. This must have been the origin of the Divine Right of Kings—an idea from which our Stuart Sovereigns suffered so badly, and which showed even more strongly in poor, preposterous old Louis XIV. of France. Although he lived till the eighteenth century A.D., and they long years before the Christian era, he had learnt no better than those old Princes of Tyre. Don't you remember his names of *Roi Soleil* and *Louis Dieudonné?*

The idea of a dying god who came to life again was one of the oldest and widest-spread religious ideas. I will give you a few of the best-known examples which you will constantly come across if you are reading classics.

Osiris must die or the Nile would not rise and make Egypt fruitful. They used to make images of him in

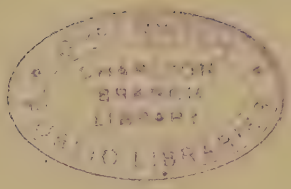
clay and bind the clay with cornstalks, leaving the ear on the stalk. These were buried, and when the corn sprouted it pushed its way through the clay Osiris, so that his body literally caused the crop to grow. Now this was the idea of the ancient Egyptians, but we have its exact parallel. Do you know a song called *Sir John Barleycorn?*

"They took a plough and ploughed him in,
Clods harrowed on his head,
And then they took a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.

"There he lay sleeping in the ground
Till rain did on him fall;
Then Barleycorn sprang up his head
And so amazed them all!"

You will notice a shower of English rain brought him to life again, while Osiris had to wait for Nile water.

Then there was the beautiful god Adonis, who was killed by a wild boar. When he died his mourners made little "gardens" and wept and lamented over them. When the gardens (which had no root) began to wither they were thrown into the sea or into rivers as a charm to bring rain, and with the rain Adonis reappeared as a beneficent young Spring god. They still make his gardens in Sardinia, Sicily and other parts of Europe, generally at Carnival time. They fill pots or baskets with earth and sow wheat, barley and flower seeds, and water them so that they spring up quickly. They have forgotten the very name of Adonis, but long-established custom makes them go on



THE FLAMBOROUGH SWORD DANCE.

Performed by members of the English Folk Dance Society. "Rounds" following the track of the sun, while the lock of swords is held aloft (*page* 13).

doing it. If they left off there might be a drought, you know, and that would spoil the crops. *Nothing dies so hard as tradition.* Then, again, there was another beautiful god, that Northern god who came into England with our Viking ancestors.

"Balder the Beautiful is dead.
His mourning hounds lie howling at home."

Balder died once a year and was reincarnated in his own young son each Spring. His picture may be seen —so learned people say—cut in the chalk of the bare South Downs. There he is, a gigantic white figure coming through the portals of Valhalla—the Long Man of Wilmington.

This idea of death and resurrection crops out curiously in one of our own old Christmas Carols:

"What in ancient days was slain
This day calls to life again."

It is still the same old notion, and the bottom of it is the drama of dying Winter and the year being reborn with the young, fresh Spring. If the village King represented the god of vegetation, then he too must die and be renewed in a younger man.

Now and then I expect the people were glad of the opportunity to rid themselves of a tyrant, and then the King-priest became an involuntary victim. In one sacred grove we know of, each King-priest had to die by the hand of his successor.

"From the still, glassy lake that sleeps
Beneath Aricia's trees,
Those trees in whose dim shadow

The ghastly priest doth reign,
The priest who slew the slayer
And shall himself be slain."

Then it came about the King's son took his father's place, and after that a criminal or a prisoner. Later still, as humane ideas gained strength, an animal was substituted;* and later on again, when people had forgotten the terrors of Winter starvation, they grudged even the animal, and took to offering cakes or beer, or even rags and pins. So do men's minds push slowly towards the light.

When the poor victim, whoever he might be—King, King's son, criminal or animal—had been made away with, the next idea was for each man to get a piece of the sacrifice for himself. It sounds horrid, doesn't it? Suppose it was a bull, they would cut him up and each take a little bit. You see, they thought in their dim, ignorant way that if they possessed a piece they would possess with it some of the strength and power of the god—for you must not forget that the victim *was* the god—and they made sure a portion was brought into their house or village to ensure the well-being of the house and village until the next Spring.

Don't forget this point, for we shall hear a good deal of the "Luck" presently. Then the serious part of the ceremony was finished, and the people turned with relief to feasting and dancing. It must have been a terrible thing to kill your god, even if you secretly

* Animal sacrifices preceded as well as succeeded human sacrifices. Very primitive gods were often imagined in animal form, so of course it was as an animal they died. You can read of this in the "Ox-murder" of ancient Greece.

knew all the time it was only a bull, so no wonder they were thankful to get it over. Then the sun comes out, the east wind drops, presently the leaves burst out and the corn springs up, and the people know that the yearly sacrifice has not been in vain.

CHAPTER II

1. The Spring Festivals of To-day—Sword Dances.

We still hold our Spring festivals in England. Our village club-walks, our Whitsuntide Morris dances, our Sword dances, our village processions, our Rogation processions have each and all sprung from the old primitive ceremonies like the one in the sacred grove on the hilltop. In their journey down the ages they have lost their awfulness, they have become representations only, mere shadows of the original thing. Some, like Jack-in-the-Green of the Sweep's Holiday, have degenerated into foolery. Some have lost one part of their ritual, some another part. To some, brand-new ideas from the Middle Ages have accrued and firmly stuck ever since. These are the pieces of cloak which have to be fitted and refitted, and sometimes unsewn altogether. But through all the changes and degradations you can see the ceremonious foundation; pathetic shreds of former grandeur hang still about these queer old doings.

Are you surprised that I say we have them still in

England? Here are just a few of the places where they live under the guise of Sword dances.

Walbottle on the Roman Wall—where foreign civilisation stayed longest, there native barbaric ideas outlived it—Haxby, Winlaton, Flamborough under Flamborough Head, Sleights on the moor behind Whitby, Kirby Malzeard near Ripon, and a score of other villages in the North. Many of these places own a Mumming Play as well, of which the dance is a part. Some have lost their play and show a dance only, while others have lost the dance and only the play survives. This is especially so as we travel southwards. But almost every Sword dance retains the essential point of the original drama. *It begins or ends with a beheading.*

Mumming Plays always contain a death and a resurrection. Someone is killed—very often he is called St. George or sometimes even Lord Nelson—the "doctor" runs up and administers a pill and the dear deceased immediately jumps to his feet as well as ever. It sounds poor stuff, but for all that the never-omitted incident contains the germ of that æon-old imagination —Death and Resurrection.

When the dance is divorced from the play we find that either there remain relics or a tradition of a former play, or else the death incident appears in the dance. One of the dancers will be decapitated, or the Fool who goes with them, or it may be the Captain of the team. This is extremely interesting, because surely in his death we see a survival of the King-victim? The Sword dancers clash their swords in a very terrifying manner; then they take each the point of the next man's sword in their left hand while holding the hilt of their

own in the right hand, so that a large ring is made, a sword between every man and his neighbour. Then begin the mysterious figures, the winding and unwinding, the springing over, the passing under the swords, and finally the *Lock* or *Rose* made by weaving the swords together, under and over, into a tight pattern which can be held aloft in triumph by the Captain. When all the figures—which never repeat themselves—have been worked through, the victim steps into the centre and the Lock is placed over his head and rests round his neck. At a word of command each man sharply draws his sword out of the Lock, and I do assure you the first time I saw it, what with the rasping of the swords, the violent cutting movement of the arms and the falling figure of the slain Captain, I never expected him to get up again!

2. Two Games.

Now let us consider a very different form of the death and resurrection tradition. This is, I suppose, the simplest form, probably existing always alongside the more elaborate representations of it. Children have always copied what they see their elders doing. You may see them playing at a funeral any day—in the game of *Jenny Jones*, for instance. I have not the least doubt but that they played at a Spring Sacrifice. Look at that game we play with small brothers and sisters at children's parties. I mean *Oranges and Lemons*. Do you remember the last line? It tells of a victim:

"*Here comes a candle to light you to bed;*
Here comes a chopper to chop off your head."

The last child is caught and his head chopped off by the people who make the arch. Nobody wants to be last; they hurry through the arch as hard as they can go for fear of being executed. And then perhaps the tug-of-war which ends the game is a relic of the struggle for a piece of the Luck.

Now look at another game which we all know too. It also contains the idea of a victim, but here applied to a special necessity.

They are building a bridge. What is it to be built of? Every sort of material is suggested, but none will do.

"*Bricks and mortar will not stay,*
Will not stay,
Will not stay";

and again:

"*Wood and clay will wash away,*
Wash away,
Wash away."

Then the "motif" seems suddenly to change, and a prisoner is hauled off to jail. But that seeming irrelevance is the essential point of the game. The "poor prisoner" is the victim once more, and on his living body a pier of the bridge will be reared. A wheaten sacrifice is useless, for—

"*Penny loaves will mould away,*
Mould away,
Mould away."

Nothing but flesh and blood will do. Prehistoric bridge-builders demanded a human body to soften the

insult caused their river deity when they presumed to span his waters.

I mention these two games because both are in reality children's dances. *London Bridge* is sometimes danced in pairs, *Oranges and Lemons* always in single file. And the tunes are delightful dance tunes.

3. Processional Dances.

Some places have processions only; no Sword dance and no play. They have lost the complete ritual.

A good example is the *Helston Furry Dance*. We do not know what "Furry" means, but the meaning of the procession is clear enough. The whole town takes part, just as the whole village took part in that long-ago ceremony we have pictured. As the Chief of that village led the people, so the Mayor of Helston leads his town dance. As those poor people put on their best skins and most successfully woven garments, so the Helston people put on their best clothes—tall hats, spats, buttonholes for the men; fresh summer dresses for the girls. They dance down their streets and tell you plainly what they are about, for they sing—

> "*We are up as soon as the day*
> *For to fetch the Summer home O!*
> *The Summer and the May*
> *Now Winter is a-gone O!*"

They are waking up the old god of Spring and vegetation, and bringing him into the town. Young men of Helston used to go (and very likely still go) out into the woods and "fetch in the May" in the shape of fresh green boughs. They do no killing here, but

content themselves with bringing in the new and resurrected god. "The May" seems to be a vegetable representation of him—boughs, greenery, flowers, garlands; though sometimes it is a human representation too—that is, a man or girl dressed out in green leaves and flowers like Jack-in-the-Green or a May Queen.

The young men of Helston fetched in the May very thoroughly, for the procession dances in and out of the houses as well as in the streets, thus making sure that each householder gets his share of the "Luck."

Another game here comes into my mind which seems like a children's attempt at a May procession:

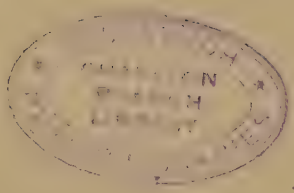
"In and out the windows,
In and out the windows,
In and out the windows,
As we have done before."

As we have done before! Yes, perhaps for a thousand years and more.

The Helston Procession has one link with some long-ago drama, for they take with them a strange character called Aunt Mary Moses. He is a man in woman's clothes and is well known all over England, for he goes with almost every Sword and Morris team, and appears in the Mumming Plays. He is generally called "the Moll" or "Betsy." He is evidently a person of great importance, for whatever has been forgotten he still lives. He is one of the mysteries of the Spring festivals, and though now degraded to the position of a comic character, he was once a—perhaps *the*—leading figure. Quite possibly he is a representation of the King-priest himself—a man in a flowing robe. You know we sometimes hear that priests wear petti-

"THE ROSE."

A Morris from the Cotswolds, danced by members of the English Folk Dance Society. They are performing "fore-capers" with both feet off the ground, and their Rounds are reversed or *contra solis* (*page* 21).



coats, and in a literal sense they do. The tune for the Helston dance is one of the most enticing dance tunes you ever heard. It is the traditional tune, played since nobody knows when, and I hope one day you may have the joy of dancing to it, even though you do not go to Helston in Cornwall.

Now we travel up the Great Western Railway from Cornwall, change trains at Bristol, and on to Derbyshire in a London, Midland and Scottish express. There we find ourselves right up in the Peak District, in a village called Castleton. There, on the 29th of May, they process round the village with solemn ritual which is always the same. A Besom man sweeps the people out of the way with his broom. Morris dancers dance their processional, tossing up sprigs of oak. Now, I fear, they are girls in white with flower wreaths, and the oak sprigs are replaced by sticks with ribbon streamers. The mysterious Man-Woman appears in crown and veil riding a-horseback; and most exciting of all, there comes a strange person entirely covered with greenery down to the thighs. You can just see his legs as he sits on his horse, which is led by a special official. Why is he inside this green cage?

Because he, in person, represents "the May." He is a living Maypole, a green tree, the inevitable King-priest covered with leaves in order to be as much like the Spring god as possible.

But who, then, is that other man dressed in woman's clothes and called the Queen? I really cannot unwind the tangle. It is confused, and still more confused when you hear that besides a human Queen they make a beautiful bunch of flowers to decorate the front of the

green extinguisher, and this also is called "the Queen." So it seems as though that character were duplicated, doesn't it?

The Castleton Garland King rides to the church when he has finished his perambulations, and his heavy extinguisher is hauled from off his head up to the church tower and kept there on a pinnacle until it withers. This festival, too, is the act of the whole village, like the Helston Procession and like that other procession of ancient times. Many people grow flowers for the Garland; the bellringers organise the affair; the oldest and chief residents as well as the children take part, and the Church acknowledges it.

It has a Mumming Play also, now divorced from the procession and acted by boys about Christmas-time. In this play three characters have blackened faces (of which later), two men are killed and come to life again by means of miraculous pills administered by a Doctor.

The usual method of entrance is for each person to announce himself by name. The Sword dancers often give a short résumé of their chief characteristics, such as "Here comes Bonaparte," and "This one is as crool as crool can be." The Mummers who have left off their dance do just the same. So these Derbyshire boys proclaim with delicious baldness, "In comes I, ain't been yet!" and they finish their danceless play with the following allusion to the other part of the ceremony four months later:

> "*A-mumming we will go, we'll go,*
> *A-mumming we will go,*
> *With a blue cockade all in our hats*
> *We'll go to the Garland show.*"

4. The Morris.

Now we come to the places where they have left off dancing with swords like those slayers of old, and have taken to sticks and handkerchiefs instead. These are the Morris villages, though the Sword dancers call themselves Morris men also. The Morris occupies the middle of England as the Sword dancers do the North. We find it in Northants, Derbyshire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, and as far south as the Cotswolds; indeed, there is in the Star Chamber Proceedings mention of a Morris in Somerset.

In many of these places they have traces of a Mumming Play. At Bampton (Oxon), for instance, there used to be a play performed at Christmas, and still strange characters accompany the Morris "side" when they dance at Whitsuntide. A Fool goes with them, and an old man called the Sword Bearer. He carries a cake impaled on his sword's point and offers slices of it for sixpence. No doubt this is a relic of a wheaten sacrifice, and the piece he offers you is for luck. Indeed, he says so. "Send it to a friend to put under his pillow for luck," was his direction to me.

The little girls of Bampton follow the Morris, carrying charming garlands made of two hoops thrust through each other at right angles and covered with greenery and flowers. They, too, are bringing in the May.

The Morris is performed by six men in two files of three a side. They hold themselves very upright and their faces are grave. The usual step is a springing step, not high off the ground, but when "Capers" are

performed the music slows down and gives the men time to leap as high as they can. They still keep straight and upright, and alight with rhythmical, somewhat heavy thuds. The bells upon their legs ring in time with the Capers, and the effect is exciting and strange.

It may interest you to hear of others who leap likewise. One example is from modern Russia, the other from very, very ancient Crete.

In Russia girls leap in a hoop covered with leaves and flax. A bell is affixed to the hoop, which, like those on the Morris men's legs, rings gaily. As the girls leap they cry, "Grow, Flax, grow!" And they seem to think that the higher they can jump the higher the stalk will grow.

The other is from an inscribed stone at Crete—long before the great days of Greece this must have been carved.

"To us also, leap for full jars,* and leap for fleecy flocks, and leap for fields of fruit and for hives to bring increase."

It seems too good to be true to find them doing the same thing three thousand years later at Bampton on Whit-Monday.

Some Morris dances need waving white handkerchiefs, others clashing sticks; and the performers are carefully dressed in clean white shirts and trousers, bowler hats with ribbons and bunches of flowers, and every man has a pair of bell-pads on his legs. These look like miniature rag mats and almost hide the bells sewn amongst the rags.

* The full jars meant wine jars after a good vintage.

The dances are various and the tunes delightful. Every time the side leaves the farm or garden where they have been dancing they perform a little processional which carries them out of the premises and down the road in proper order. This is called *Green Garters* and involves a farewell waving of the handkerchiefs. The music is supplied by a fiddler who was once the Fool and who only learnt to play the tunes in order to keep the side together. He still cries his old jokes, the most frequent of which was, "One by one in twos, you lazy rascals!"

I have told you the counties in which the Morris flourished and flourishes. Some of the actual villages are Headington outside Oxford, Witney of blanket fame, Abingdon, Bidford, Whitchurch (Salop), while the Cotswold villages—Stow-on-the-Wold, Leafield, and Ilmington—used to vie with each other as to which produced the best Morris men. And as to Sherborne (Glos), that was called "a desperate Morris place."

5. Some Morris Dances.

I will tell you here of a few particularly interesting dances, though my attempt at description is bound to fall flat, I fear. You must hear the enticing tunes, listen to the peculiar jingle of the bells and the light thud of the feet; you must look at the madly waving handkerchiefs and the sudden opening of the close column into "rounds" or "heys" before you can appreciate the excitement and joy of an English Morris.

First I want to tell you of two dances danced to the same tune, and that a very ancient one, handed down by ear from one village musician to another. It is

called *Shepherd's Hey*. A hey is a figure in which you wind about, passing and repassing your neighbours in the form of an S. In old days people often spoke of "heying" to and fro even when they were not dancing. Well, the first Shepherd's Hey is done by six men in the usual column, two and two, alternating with this figure S. It is a remarkable dance because at the end of each phrase there comes a pause. On the pause the dancers stand stock-still with arms outspread at the level of their shoulders, and the effect is wonderfully solemn. They look for all the world as though they might be adoring that Spring god of old, standing before his altar-stone in the sacred grove.

The second dance to the *Shepherd's Hey* tune is for one or perhaps two men only. It begins in an ordered but lively manner. Suddenly the dancer begins touching himself here and there—head, cheeks, breasts, legs, and after the touch throws out his hand as though he had something to bestow upon the onlookers. I think he has. It really seems that he is bestowing that body he has so solemnly indicated. Perhaps they danced like that before the god, and in this manner showed their willingness to sacrifice that body.

Now look (I wish you really could) at a very lively dance. The bells ring madly and the handkerchiefs flutter about like Milton's "wavering Morrice." Many figures are danced through and then the usual ring is formed. First it moves round following the track of the sun, as do all Morris rings—that is, with each dancer's right shoulder towards the middle; then every man faces inward and the ring closes up tighter and tighter. The feet step quicker and quicker, bells

shake and ring louder and louder. You feel certain something is going to happen. It does. The dancers are now in a tight bunch, when suddenly high above their heads appears a man hoisted into mid-air!

This grand finale has an ancient and interesting origin. The old method of electing a Chief was to raise him on the shields of the warriors; we know that the Visigoths thus elected Pelayo as King before they began that southward march against the Moors which many hundred years later brought them to the walls of Granada. We know it is done also in German Sword dances, and here we find it in a Morris dance performed at Witney in Oxfordshire!

One more attempt to make you see something strange and interesting. Here is the usual Morris ring, or round. Then the column of six men is formed and each man faces his partner. They bend down and solemnly and painstakingly thump the ground with their sticks. They rise up and dance another figure, bend and thump again. What on earth are they about? They are dramatising the sowing of the seed in Spring. First they dance in the track of the sun and next they turn their sticks into dibbling sticks with which to make holes for the seed in the freshly turned earth. This little wordless drama is called *Bean-setting* and is a miniature representation of the dying god—Osiris or John Barleycorn, or whatever name you like—put into the dark ground to wait for the Spring rain, when he will assuredly rise up again. Of course, the Morris men don't think of this; they are simply dancing a dance called *Bean-setting*, because they always have done so and because Spring is the proper time to dance.

CHAPTER III

1. Disguise.

Amongst all the scraps and remnants of the Spring ceremonial we find one common to every part of England and used in such diverse survivals as Sword dances, Morris, Mumming Plays, Riding the Stang, and the extraordinary Haxey Hood Game.* We find this common factor from Northumberland to Spain, from the Bay of Biscay to the Tyrol. It spreads far beyond our country. I mean disguise. And the easiest of all disguises is to black one's face.

Many Sword and Morris men black their faces, and Fools innumerable. It seems there must be a mystery as to who the dancers are, and when we remember that once they were slayers, it is easy to see why they wished to keep their identities secret.

I found a trace of this feeling once myself when I asked an old woman who the Morris men were. She made a great pretence of ignorance. But a girl who had no respect for tradition called out, "Why, Mrs. Cole, you know who they be!" and forthwith blurted out all their names.

Some teams of dancers are actually called *Guisers*—

* This does not come under the head of Folk-dances, for although some of the participants are dressed as Morris men they no longer dance. But they fight for a roll of canvas! The canvas probably represents a sacrificial bull and the winning side takes home the Luck. Their Fool has a blackened face, makes a speech about bulls—although not one is to be seen now—and is smoked over a bonfire. Once, no doubt, he was burnt in it.

that is, *Disguisers*, and in Lancashire the Fool is often known as "Dirty Bet," alluding to his black face.

At Bidford the Captain wears a foxskin on his head with the tail hanging down his back. This may be a disguise, or it may be an outcome of that old confusion between god and priest—a god in animal form, and the priest attempting to take on himself the attributes of the god by putting on his skin—like the Castleton Garland King, who wraps himself in the leaves of a tree god. This is called "sympathetic magic." If you sprinkle water about or throw things into a river they get wet and you expect rain to follow this artificial wetting. If you make a fire, or copy the movement of the sun across the heavens, you may be sure the sun will take the hint and the weather will be warm. So if you dress up in the skin or leaves of your god you may possibly get some of his power and strength into you, and so have luck all through the year.

In ancient Greece they did just the same. The women devotees of Dionysus, the Spring god (who often appeared in the form of a beautiful bull), wore bull's horns upon their heads. And at Kingscote in Gloucestershire a man used to accompany the Christmas Wassaillers dressed in a sack, his head in a real bull's face, hair and horns complete. Perhaps he does so still.

Then there is that wonderful survival at Abbots Bromley, Stafford. These dancers use horns, too, for their disguising, but they are great stag's horns, said to be reindeer horns. How and when did they come into England, I wonder? The hobby horse goes with them, but the dance itself is much corrupted now. It consists of one figure only and is neither a pure Morris

nor a real Processional. The interest lies in the animal disguise of the performers, and in their man in woman's dress.

E. K. Chambers* sees in these animal disguises as well as in the hobby horse "nothing but worshippers careering in the skins of sacrificial animals." Unfortunately the ceremony at Abbots Bromley can no longer be called a Spring festival. I hear that well-meaning people, anxious to support their village speciality, have interfered with the traditional date. In 1688 it was performed on Twelfth Night. This would be a very early Spring festival, at the turn of the year. Then it was done in the village Wake week—the Monday after the day of dedication of their church. Now any convenient day is chosen. The great horns are kept hung up in the church all the year, and this brings me to another most interesting point.

2. Church Influence on the Spring Festivals.

When England became Christianised the missionary priests found that the native Spring ceremonies had such a firm hold on the people that it was utterly impossible to wean them from it all. *Nothing is harder to kill than tradition.*

Pope Gregory in his wisdom understood this. He wrote a letter to St. Augustine advising him to use the native festivals for his own ends rather than to attempt to tear the people from them. So the new religion took them over, as it were, and the Church allowed their continuance, attached Saints' names to the age-old rites, and told the people that the great May

* In his "Medieval Stage."

feasts were in honour of St. Philip and St. James, or part of the Whitsuntide festival, and that the Beltane fires, which blazed on all the hillsides of old England at the summer solstice, were now lit to the glory of St. John the Baptist.

The Church took a maternal interest in the Morris and the hobby horse. They were so much an accepted institution that medieval churchwardens' accounts show that accessories were even provided by the parish funds.

From the accounts of St. Lawrence, Reading, we learn that the "Moreys Dawncers" performed on the Dedication Day, 1513, and were given 3d. for ale.

In 1509 "*six peyre of shone for the Mors daunsers*" cost 4s.

In 1530 twelvepence was paid for "*a grosse of bells for the Morece dawnsers.*"

Dr. Cox, in his "Curious Church Customs," tells us that in later medieval days the Morris men constantly went into the church and gave their first dance in the nave before starting on their rounds.

The idea of dancing in church seems strange to us, but it is only since Puritan days that it has become so. Presently you shall see that in France the practice lasted well into the eighteenth century, and in Spain it exists to-day.

To go back to a few amusing churchwardens' entries:

At Tavistock, 1464, a child received 4d. "*for dawnsing with the hobye hors.*"

At Culworth, 1541, they paid 3s. "*for paynting of the hoby horse clothes.*"

The churchwardens sometimes turned an honest penny by hiring out their costumes to neighbouring parishes. For instance, at Great Marlow in 1612 they gained 2s. 6d. "*for the loane of our Morris coats and bells.*"

In an inventory we read that Mother Church did not disdain to count among her goods "*5 coates for dancers and a Fryer's coate*"—the sixth man evidently appeared as Friar Tuck.

Also "*24 dancing belles and 6 yards of white wollen clothe.*"

This, I take it, was for the six Morris men to wave, half a yard in each hand.

At Great Marlow, 1608, "*among the goods belonging to the Church 5 pr of garters of bells.*" And I suppose the inventory of Abbots Bromley Church contains to-day, "*6 pr of stag's horns.*" At Castleton we do find an entry as late as 1749: "*Paid for an iron rod to hang ye ringers' Garland 8d.*"

3. Rogation Processions.

The connection between the Church and the Spring festivals became so close that presently we see the Christian clergy themselves leading forth the people into the fields to pray for good weather and to bless the crops—and you may be sure the processions wound round the fields in the sun's track, for we know that Church processions only went *contra solis* in seasons of mourning. So quite unconsciously the parish priests still performed the customary sun charm!

Rogation Processions

If we look again at that never-failing source of information—churchwardens' accounts—we learn that Rogation processions were of some splendour. They were festivals as well as seasons of prayer.

At Bassingbourne (Cambs), in 1503, they had "*banners which were borne about the fieldes.*"

At St. Thomas, Sarum, 1557, they decorated "*the endes of the banners with bells.*"* So the Church procession jingled forth like the Morris.

They feasted also at various points of their journey, for the parish of All Saints', Derby, bought "16 *doz buns for the processioning*," and that as late as 1782; while at Chelsea the Perambulation dinner cost £3 10s.

Then at St. Peter's, Ipswich, 1639, we find the curious entry, "*For bread and beere for the boyes . . . 8d.*"

What boys? Why must boys be specially provided for?

We find the answer in the accounts of Hawkhurst Church, Kent, 1673:

"*For ribbons and plumes for the boyes that went ye bounds . . . 5s. 6d.*"

At Chelsea: "*Pd. for poynts† for the boys . . . 2s.*"; and finally: "*Given to the boys that were whipt . . . 4s.*"

You have heard, of course, of beating the bounds. When the Rogation processions go forth they move round the boundaries of the parish. They take little

* Bells were always considered useful for scaring away devils.

† Points were the ribbons which fastened doublets.

sons of the parish with them, and at certain points they bump them up and down on the boundary-line or beat them with sticks. You can see it done in London every Rogation week if you take the trouble to go out and look. The beating and the bumping are supposed to impress the extent of the parish on their young minds, but the reason at the bottom of this is far older than parish boundaries.

Sometimes they used to catch a stranger and beat him not only on the bounds, but over them. Ah! here we get a clearer glimpse of one of those scraps of old ideas which we are trying to piece together. This stranger, these boys, were personifications of Winter. Just as Spring was personified to the people's dim understanding in the greenery brought into the village, or by the person covered with leaves, so Winter took a human shape and had to be driven over the village boundary, carrying with him frost and cold.

You remember I told you of the slave who was driven out of doors by the old Greeks when they cried, "Out with Ox-hunger"? He, no doubt, was a personification of Winter, and must depart before Spring could come in with health and wealth.

People chase out Winter from many a village all over Europe even to-day. Sometimes they duck him in a pond or river, sometimes they beat him, sometimes he is only a dummy like Guy Fawkes and is most cruelly treated in consequence. In the Isle of Man "Winter," clad in furs, meets "Summer," decorated with flowers, and their followers have a stand-up fight before the former is driven away.

Mixed up with all this is the idea of a scapegoat.

The Jews were by no means the only people to drive out a scapegoat, you know. Someone had to carry off the miseries of the cold, and the sins of the people, so a passing stranger would come in very handily for this office. He would thus be in some sort a victim also, laden with the sufferings and the terrors of Winter. Victims were wont to be adorned. Is that why in the year 1673 they dressed up the "boyes that went ye bounds" in ribbons and plumes and smart new points? Rogation processions, being safe under the wing of the Church, have never faded out, and their purpose is the selfsame purpose for which those long-ago processions were led forth by their terrible old King-priest, and for which those half-converted Prussians went into the woods and drank beer in 1553.

Side by side with the Rogation processions lived, and live, such non-Church ceremonies as the Helston Furry Dance, the processions at St. Austell, Grampound, and the extraordinary Bezzant procession at Shaftesbury. They all must have sprung from the same root, but I imagine these I have named were carried on by stubborn pagans who resisted the Church influence and chose to organise their Spring festivities without interference. They are often looked at askance now by superior people, and the Morris men and the Mummers are too often the least respectable of the villagers. But the Church built up a nobler edifice on the crumbling remains of already half-forgotten ideas. She opened a window upon the dark beliefs in which people struggled, and they saw more clearly. So to-day we still see the Painswick folk "clipping the Church"; the Castleton Garland Procession organised by the church ringers

and the Garland kept on the church tower; the Abbots Bromley horns guarded by the Church; the college choir greeting "the May" from the top of Magdalene Tower; and the clergy leading forth the Spring processions at Rogation tide; in short, from the St. John's fires down to the jingling of the Morris bells the whole paraphernalia of corn sprites, tree sprites, wood gods, rain gods, holy wells, and ragged thorns was taken under the Church's wide and generous wing.

You probably think that these poor old worn-out deities, together with the pixies, good people and brownies, are dead and buried long ago? But when I tell you that bulls were sacrificed at Dingwall in 1656; that a woman and her husband were executed at York in 1648 for *human* sacrifice; that a farmer at Meary, Devon, burnt a sheep on Catersham Tor in 1853 to stop cattle disease; that another Devonshire farmer (and a churchwarden, too!) drew a circle on the ground and threw up a white cock, which dropped dead in the circle and thus stopped illness amongst his herd; that in the Highlands people used to make their children jump through the flames of the Midsummer fires; that in 1769 they sat round this sacred blaze on their hill-top and would fling each a piece of oatcake over his shoulder saying, "This I give to thee, preserve thou my sheep," and "This I give to thee, preserve thou my horses"; that in Moray as late as 1869 a cow was buried alive to stop cattle disease; that finally you may still see people nailing rheumatism to a tree, drinking solemnly from a wishing-well and impaling rags on thorns as an oblation to they know not whom—why, then, I think you will acknowledge that in spite of electric trams, moving

staircases, and the marvels of broadcasting, these old-time godlings are still alive and feebly kicking in our old England.

CHAPTER IV

1. Folk-Dances of Other Nations.

Now we will look at a few dances of other peoples for the sake of comparison. It is certain that each country grew its own dances, so to speak, in spite of similarities, or perhaps because of them. It is not probable—is it?—that France would steal from Spain, or that we should steal from Scandinavia, an intangible thing, yet a thing so inalienably connected with the life of the people as a dance. I ask you this because until now England has been shorn of her rightful belongings, especially where it concerned the arts. We might copy music and dance—and we did far too much of both—but never, never could we originate. Such has been the opinion of two centuries, and such was the opinion of the cock-sure lady who repudiated *Jacob Hall's Jig*.

We have been told this sort of stuff so long that we almost believe it, but it is not in the least true, of course. Our folk-music can hold its own with any country in Europe, and our folk-dances probably surpass those of any other nation—at least, to an English mind.

Now you shall see how widespread is the idea of Spring rites, processions and dances.

2. Spain.

In Spain there exist many survivals of the Spring Nature dance, but so overlaid are they with Church embroideries that they have in a large measure lost their meaning.

They dance in church—yes, in the choirs of cathedrals! This is done in Spain and Portugal, but the chief example is from Seville. This dance plainly shows the way the Church took possession of the primitive rite.

It is performed in front of the High Altar. It is done on Corpus Christi Day and twice besides during the year. It is called "*Los Seises*," which means six. This is the traditional number for a Morris side, you remember, but now at Seville it is done by ten boys. They are choirboys who must be without deformity or blemish. They wear dresses of the time of Philip III. They dance the selfsame figures as the Morris—sacred circles and the serpentine figure we call the hey.

In Wells's "Outline of History" I find this passage: "*Nearly everywhere that Neolithic culture went, there went a disposition to associate the sun and serpents in decoration and in worship.*"

Rounds.

First half.

Second half.

Hey.

That they are still used in a form of Christian wor-

ship we cannot deny, seeing they are performed before the altar. But in the endeavour to fit the dance to its surroundings the priests have shorn it of everything exciting and Morris-like save the shape of the figures. It is slow and stately now, and the boys sing to *La Madre de Dios*, while an amusing modern touch is given by the click of castanets. However, there it still is—a prehistoric Nature dance under the auspices of the Church.

At Pampeluna a Spring procession is led through the town by the Mayor. (You remember the Mayor of Helston leads the Furry Dance.) He and the town Corporation dance outside the Cathedral, but they do not enter. The ceremony is now supposed to be a thanksgiving for deliverance from the Moors.

Spain also once boasted a Sword dance called *Matachin*, of which the leading figure was—like ours—a beheading.

3. France.

We find many Spring ceremonies in various parts of *la belle France*. That game, so well known amongst our children—*Threading the Needle*—is played quite seriously by grown-up people in Central France and the Auvergne. One hundred dancers take part and will "hey" about in an immense serpent, winding through an arch of upraised hands. They do not at all mind acknowledging that this performance is to make the hemp grow.

At Béziers (at least as late as 1876 and perhaps still) a procession goes out on Ascension Day. It has taken on the appearance of a carnival, for a wooden camel dis-

ports itself instead of a hobby horse, there is a ship on wheels, and a theatre on a cart. The ceremony is patronised by civic authorities and the priests. Young men and women carry hoops (like the Bampton children) decorated with ribbons. A girl crowned with flowers evidently represents "the May." Presently they dance with green branches and loaves of bread upon their heads. These are probably the relics of a corn sacrifice. I should like to see this ceremony. It must be a splendid example of the Nature rite, containing all the essentials—"the May" in person, green leaves, cereal offerings—and is supported by the whole community, civic and ecclesiastic.

At Ramerupt en Champagne on May Day twenty people went to St. Remy near by to fetch a horned ram. This creature they led back in triumph, dancing round him and decorating him with ribbons. We do not hear what happened to the ram. Possibly he was killed and eaten, and thus would represent the animal god and the Luck of the town.

The French also brought their dances into church. In 1683, we read, the senior Canon led the choristers in a circular dance while singing praise.

At Besançon a church dance took place on Easter Day as late as 1738 to the tune of a "bergerette." This is a very un-ecclesiastical little melody generally set to verses of love, shepherds and shepherdesses.

This church dancing was an accepted institution, for there are ecclesiastical directions concerning it. In the Liturgie de Paris we read:

"*Le Chanoine ballera au premier psaume*" (The Canon will dance during the first psalm!).

These are only a very few examples of many processions, but the Basque country down in the angle of the Bay of Biscay—that's a "desperate Morris place."

I have seen them dancing in and out, up and down the little towns from morning till night. They begin with the fine weather in March, and dance, mostly on Sundays, till June. A prolonged Spring festival. They often trot out a hobby horse of rather a different type from ours, and they certainly dance a good deal better than the traditional Morris men I have seen in England. Possibly this is due to their Southern lissomness, and to the fact of their wearing the esparto-soled Basque shoes instead of clumping English boots.

Their dances were so much like ours that I could easily have joined in. They used sticks and hit across so hard that the sticks splintered off at their tops. The team I first saw used very slender beribboned sticks and performed a double-stick dance—that is, a stick in either hand—after the style of our *Constant Billy* (Sherborne, Glos). They leaped remarkably lightly, and in one processional were fond of turning a complete pirouette in the air, before proceeding on their way. They proceeded from one pitch to another in serious, ceremonious style, each in his place, the musicians bringing up the rear. One team I saw set up a Maypole and danced round it, as did the Morris men of Leafield when they danced *The Rose*.

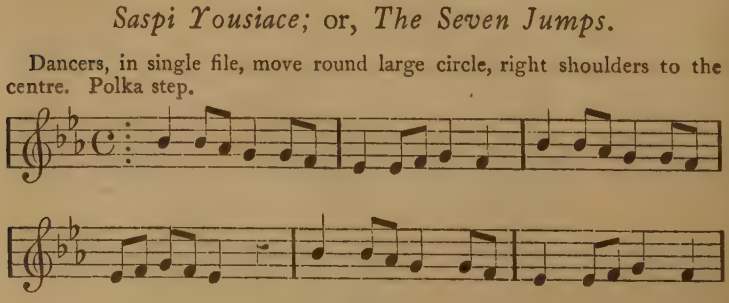
One Basque Captain was of such superior order that he merely conducted with a beribboned *bâton*, not dancing himself; but the Captains usually dance like our Morris foremen, at the head of the procession, carrying a flag.

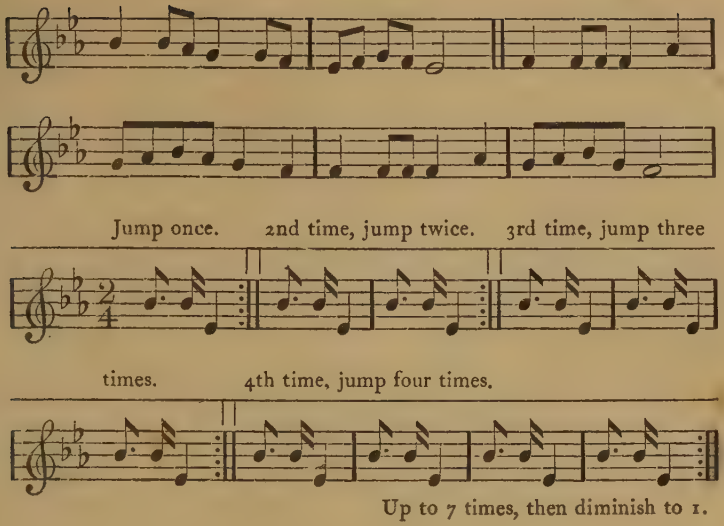
The most common dance is a processional in single or double file, and its very name recalls the original intention of the performers. Like those youths of old Cretan days, they are leaping for a good vintage, and their dance is called *Le Saut Basque* (the Basque Jump).

Another astounding performance of theirs is *Saspi Yousiace*, or the Seven Jumps. They move round the sacred circle in single file, and on the last bar of the tune everybody jumps once. The tune is repeated, the last bar is played twice and everybody jumps twice. The next time the last bar is played three times and everybody jumps three times. So it goes on till all are jumping seven times without stopping. Then it works backwards, six, five, four, three, two, and all jump once as at the beginning. It is enough to shake up any earth god, Basque or English. The jumps are prodigious, and the more agile dancers practise crossing their feet, the splits, and the most wonderful *entrechats* in mid-air. "*Ah*," said the Basque who showed me the steps, "*une fois que vous serez parti!*" I give you the tune and directions of this dance in case you might like to try it.

Saspi Yousiace; or, *The Seven Jumps.*

Dancers, in single file, move round large circle, right shoulders to the centre. Polka step.





If you will compare this with our *Rose*, the Morris-Maypole dance from Leafield, you will see that we also indulge in stupendous jumps while travelling round a circle.

A very aged Basque told me that in his village, which was down in the Landes, where they bleed the great fir-trees for resin, the dancers collected resin in little cups, and setting it alight, used the thick smoke to blacken their faces. He expressly said it was to disguise themselves—*pour se déguiser*. In other villages they wear masks, now often degenerated into carnival masks, but sometimes animal masks and horns. So, you see, the notion that the dancers must be disguised does not belong to England only.

The teams I saw were always dressed in immaculate white. Bells were sewn down the seams of their

trousers and on their toes, instead of being worn on a garter or bell pad as do our Morris men. They wore Basque *bérets*, Basque string-soled shoes, ribbons round their arms and hanging gaudily down their backs. Their band consisted of a clarionet and drum.

One team carried the Basque sword-stick called *makhila*, and performed a dance in which they clashed these sticks and which was named *Makhila Dantsa*, so I think we may say they understand the Sword dance equally with the Morris. It is a most interesting thing to see these very alien people—for the Basques are not of French blood, but are the remnants of a far older race—indulging in Spring rites so nearly resembling ours—figures, steps, and arrangements. And that is why I have told you a good deal about them.

One more example from France—Provence—and then we will return to England via Germany and Sweden.

At Fréjus on the French Riviera a procession of hobby horses trots out in May. Little boys gallop about inside them led by a big boy in a big horse. The hobbies solemnly go to church to hear Mass and sit on the steps of the altar marshalled by their Captain. So you see the priest does not mind their coming, and, like St. Augustine of old, turns the native feasts to his own ends, for he invites them to come on the day of St. François de Paul.

4. Germany.

One example only from the hundreds I might tell you of throughout Germany, Bavaria, and the Tyrol.

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BASQUE DANCERS FORMING "ROUNDS."

Like the English sword dancers on page 13. They wear bérets on their heads and espadrilles on their feet, and carry two sticks each (*page* 37).

This is a parallel to our Castleton Garland King, and that is why I have chosen it. At Grossvargula a Grass King is led in procession about the village at Whitsuntide. He is entirely encased in an extinguisher of poplar branches and the apex is crowned with flowers—precisely like the Garland King. When the procession is over the poplar branches are separated and stuck into the ground in the fields to make the flax grow tall. So these people carry their ceremony to its logical conclusion, which the Castleton people no longer do; they take "the May" out into their fields that each may have a piece of the Luck, and so acquire strength and growth.

5. Sweden.

A Swedish ecclesiastic and writer made a journey through his country and wrote about all the popular customs he had seen. This was Olaus Magnus, and he wrote about 1550. One of the things he saw was a Sword dance done by young men. He says: "They extend their swords, from hand to hand, lay hold of each other's hilts and points, and while they are wheeling round and hanging on their order, throw themselves into the figure of a hexagon, which they call a *rose*. But presently raising and drawing back their swords they undo that figure in order to form with them a four-square rose that they may rebound over the head of each other. Lastly they dance rapidly backwards, and vehemently rattling the sides of their swords together conclude their sport."

Now that might well be the description of an English Sword dance such as I tried to give you on page 12,

but the Swedish men had already forgotten the beheading. The extract from Olaus Magnus shows us that in the North as well as in the far South the same ideas reigned, the same rites must still be carried through.

CHAPTER V

1. The Name.

Now we come to a very puzzling question. When did the name *Morris* begin to be used, and who first called that particular variety of our Spring festivals by this name?

Sword dances amongst Teutonic tribes are mentioned by Tacitus; the same terms used by him are used again in our Beowulf Saga,* and the earliest medieval notice appears in 1350, of a Sword dance at Nuremburg. But none of these are called by any such name, although we consider the Sword dance to be the parent of the Morris, and our Sword dancers frequently call themselves Morris men.

As far as I can ascertain at present, the name began to appear in print just in the middle of the fifteenth century. Douce, the learned writer on Shakespeare, mentions that Morris dancers were provided by Gilles de Raiz in 1440. We hear of a Masque given by Gaston de Foix at Vendôme in 1458, when four lads and a "damosell danced an excellent Morisco."

* An Anglo-Saxon poem supposed to have existed before the Anglo-Saxons came to Britain, and to have been brought here by them.

Then we are told by Coquillart, a French poet and traveller, that the Swiss danced a Morisco to the beat of a drum in 1470; and we hear of a Morisco in Flanders at the same date. Last of all I find a mention in England. This occurs in Henry VII.'s privy purse expenses, 1494, January 2nd: "*For playing of the Mourice Dance . . . £2.*"

It has generally been taken for granted that the dance itself was brought to England by John of Gaunt's army on its return from the Spanish wars.

I cannot see why this particular return from foreign parts should thus be fixed upon. If dance or name were brought from the South by returning soldiers, they might have brought it at any moment of our occupation of Aquitaine. If it was so brought, who so likely to bring it as those men of ours stationed in the Basque lands, where, as I have shown, the native dances so nearly resemble ours?

And we occupied those lands for three hundred years, so our men had plenty of time (about ten generations) to look about them!

But believing, as I do, in the English origin of the dance, I think it quite probable that the *name* was so brought by somebody, sometime.

Every dark-skinned man was a "Moor" in the days of the reconquest of Spain. Even a woolly-headed negro was a black-a-*moor*. The supporters of the Marquis of Hertford's arms are two black-a-moors, so this misnomer had even entered heraldic language.

Finding their old village dances still going on at home; seeing their affinity to those of the French and

Spanish Basques; remarking that the home dancers disguised themselves in strange attire or by blacking their faces; remembering the swarthy Southerners who blacked their faces also as though they were still not dark enough, the homecoming soldiers quite naturally thought it was done to represent Moors, and forthwith dubbed their village performance the *Moorish* or *Morris* dance.

If we had held our French possessions longer our men would have seen the settlements of those exiled Spanish Moors who actually bore the name of Moriscoes. One such colony lived round the little Lac Mouriscot near Bayonne. But we evacuated these possessions in 1453 (John of Gaunt's army came home in 1387), and the exiled Moriscoes only came out of Spain at the end of the sixteenth century.

That we have no earlier printed record of the name is not really surprising. You may be sure that if the dance were popular enough to be written about in 1494 and previously, people had talked of it and called it by this name for half a century or more before these printed records appear. When a song arrived as a popular melody, we must always date it at least fifty years previous to its first written or printed appearance. News travelled very slowly then—by pack-horse instead of by telephone—people could neither write nor spell; even churchwardens' accounts, which multiply in the sixteenth century, were hardly begun till the middle of the fifteenth.

Anyhow, it seems that the new name brought the ancient performance freshly into fashion. Just as you will see the "new" Quadrille revived the old Country

dance. Everything Spanish and Moorish was "the thing." A rage for the Morris appears to have set in, and from the moment it first appears in print references multiply. The idea of a foreign name and a foreign dance was accepted by those who wrote about it, though probably never by the village folk themselves; and from Thoinot Arbeau, who in his "Orchesographie," 1589, tells of a boy, a turban on his head—he simply *had* to be a Moor—and bells on his legs, dancing a Morisco round the dining-hall (to a tune of almost certainly English origin, and used by Morris men of to-day), to the publication of Cecil Sharp's "Morris Book," first edition, this explanation of name and dance has never apparently been questioned.

Closer study, however, seems to correct the idea of a foreign dance transplanted on to English soil, and not only transplanted, but spreading mysteriously into the remotest corners of medieval England. In these days of gramophones, trains, and travelling, a foreign dance can be so transplanted. The American steps have travelled to the confines of civilisation. I have seen people jazzing in a far-off village of the Welsh March, in the Pyrenees, and 4,000 feet high in Valais! But fashions could not spread like this in pedestrian days, when music had to be painfully "pricked," as they called it, or carried by ear alone. Then, too, we must remember that Sword dancers call themselves Morris men equally with the stick and handkerchief dancers, and no one suggests that our Sword dances were brought from Spain, nor that the performers represent Moors.

Also, although the direct printed references come so

late, we can infer references to the Morris a couple of centuries earlier, and long before those tiresome John-of-Gaunt-men came streaming home with their talk of black-faced Moors.

For instance, there is the well-known prohibition of the May Game by Grossetête, Bishop of Lincoln before 1244. The May Game included the night wanderings in search of green boughs and flowers,* the bringing in of the Maypole, the archery matches by people representing Robin Hood and his men, and thus almost certainly included the Morris, for a little later we find the Morris an essential part of the Robin Hood Games.

Then in a book of ecclesiastical morality, called "Handlynge Synne," dating from about 1303, we read:

> "*Daunces, Karols, somour games,*
> *Of many swych come many shames.*"

Now, "Karols" were round dances which people danced as they sang Christmas and May Carols, so "daunces" must mean something other than round dances. Why not the Morris? We know it was connected with the Summer Games,† and the traditional Morris instruments, the pipe and tabor, are mentioned next:

> "*Of Interludes and singing*
> *Or tabor beat or other piping,*
> *All swyche being forbidden is*
> *While the priest standeth at Messe.*"

* See Chapter VII.

† Midsummer Games and the season for the Beltane fires. This would be a late Spring festival, just as Twelfth Night and Plough Monday were very early ones.

MORRIS DANCERS (ABOUT 1470).
From an ancient window in a house at Betley, Staffs.

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alive the memory of the men of Sherwood as supplementary characters.

At the time of the Betley Window they seem to be accepted characters, and those useful old churchwardens tell us so also. You will remember the inventory which mentioned the friar's coat.

At Croscombe on the Quantocks in 1476 we read: "*Comes in Chas Blower and John Hille and present 40s. of Roben Hod's recones*" (reckonings).

Again seventeen years later: "*Robyn Hode presents in 6 5s. and 7d.*"

There is a certain dramatic touch about the entry, "*Comes in Chas Blower and John Hille.*" You can figure them coming, two West Country rustics dressed in what they believed to be the costume of the Sherwood outlaws, and shyly handing over their forty shillings for the good of the Church. And a very handsome sum it was, too.

Then at Reading in 1493 the same thing occurs: "*Rec. of the gaderyng of Robin Hod,*" and thus for many years; while in 1538 "Maid Maryon" gave 13s. 4d. to the Church funds.

These entries do not mention the Morris, and the Quantock village of Croscombe is too far west to make it likely that Robin Hood was thus accompanied, but Reading is well into the Morris country. The *Staines Morris* is one of our best-known Morris tunes, for instance. So probably Chas. Blower and John Hille went out for their "gaderying" by themselves, but we may imagine the Reading Robin Hood with the Morris jingling at his heels, while the fact that in 1538 it was Maid Marian alone who handed in a contribution bears

out my remarks on the fading popularity of the foresters and the combination of Maid Marian with the ancient man in petticoats.

4. Literary Allusions to the Morris.

The literature and songs of the sixteenth century are so full of remarks on the Morris that I have had quite hard work to select just a few. These will show you the very familiar way in which it was treated—as one of the ordinary sights with which everybody must be thoroughly acquainted. We will begin with two allusions by Shakespeare.

In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" he speaks of a "Whitsun Morris Dance"; and in "Henry VI." he makes someone exclaim, "I see him caper upright like a wild Morisco!"

This last is interesting, for in the modern Morris we have a step called "Uprights." You leap as high off the ground as you can while holding the body perfectly erect. Indeed, to be able to caper upright is a necessity for a Morris dancer.

Other plays of Queen Elizabeth's day are full of mentions of our subject. For instance, "Summer's Last Will and Testament," 1600, contains a scene wherein a man fetches out the hobby horse and the Morris. Says Will Summer: "The finest set of Morris dancers that is between this and Streatham"—which goes to show how many sets there must have been about the country.

Songs and ballads speak of it again and again. I might fill pages with quotations showing the extraordinary popularity of the performance. Two will suffice.

"*Methinks I see no jests of Robin Hood,*
No merry Morrices of Friar Tuck."

(1597.)

This, once more, tells of the waning glory of the Sherwood men and recalls Shakespeare's "For oh! for oh! The Hobby horse is forgot!"

The second is from a delightful old song called "All good fellows must go learn to dance," printed in 1569:

"*A Band of bells in bawdrick-wise*
Would deck us in our kind-a,
A shirt after the Morris guise
To flounce it in the wind-a!"

5. "The Nine Daies Wonder."

In 1599 an actor, William Kemp, undertook for a wager to dance the Morris from London to Norwich. He was accompanied by his pipe-and-tabrer, who must have had a breathless job. Kemp achieved great notoriety through this wager, and afterwards wrote an account of his doings called "The Nine Daies Wonder." This is a unique pamphlet, and the only known copy is in the Bodleian Library. He says: "At Chelmsford a mayde not passing fourteen years made request of her Dame that she might dance the Morrice with me in a great large room. Then being entreated, I was soon wonne to fit her with bells, and to our jumps we fell. A whole hour she held out, but then she being ready to lye down, I left off."

Then at Sudbury a "lusty tall fellow, a butcher," offered to keep Kemp company, but within half a mile he gave up. "A lusty country lass" was highly indig-

nant and called him a "faint-hearted lout," exclaiming, "'If I had begun I would have held out a mile though it had cost me my life,' at which many laughed. 'Nay,' she said, 'if the dancer will lend me a leash of his bells I'll venture to tread one myle with him myself!'

"I looked upon her," says Kemp, "saw mirth in her eyes, heard boldness in her words. I fitted her with bells, which she merrily taking garnished her thicke shorte legs, and with a smooth brow bade the tabrer begin. The drum struck, forward marched I with my merry Mayde Marian who shook her fat sides and footed it to Melford."

These little incidents show us three points—that it was an ordinary thing for girls as well as men to dance the Morris; that to wear bells was considered necessary even for such an unceremonious performance as this dreary dance along the road to Norwich; and that the name of Maid Marian was still very much alive.

Kemp's performance became so renowned that a Madrigal was presently made upon it. Weelkes—our celebrated Madrigal writer—composed the music, and it was published in 1608, nine years after the event:*

"*Since Roben Hood, Maid Marian,*
And little John are gone-a,
The hobby horse was quite forgot
When Kemp did dance alone-a.
He did labour
After the tabor,
For to daunce
Then into France.

* The interval shows how slowly news travelled for the affair to be still popular. We should have forgotten all about a performance nine years ago.

He took paines
To skip it,
In hope of gaines
He did trip it
On the toe,
Diddle Doe!"

CHAPTER VI.

1. Puritan Influence.

When we talk about Merry England we generally understand the England of Elizabeth. But I believe Merry England to have been at its merriest some time before that termagant Queen. The Reformation began to make it solemn, and a strong Puritan influence growing up in the middle of the sixteenth century made it sadder and sadder.

We know that the Robin Hood Games had died away, old pastimes were looked at askance, music was generally considered as a temptation of the devil, even the music of cathedral services. You would laugh at the strictures passed upon the antiphonal chanting of the Psalms and upon the singing of choristers and lay-vicars. The Puritan mind compared the former practice to the tossing of tennis balls to and fro; and when in Cromwell's destructive days his Roundhead soldiers broke up the organ of Exeter Cathedral, they paraded the streets pretending to blow blasts upon the torn-out organ pipes and mocked the poor chorister boys, telling them they had taken the bread out of their mouths now!

A certain delightful old Puritan gentleman, Master Stubbs, turned his attention to what he was pleased to call the "Horrible Vice of Pestiferous Dancing," with plenty of capital letters. He did not overlook such harmless articles as starch—which he calls the Devil's Liquor—nor earrings, nor the little sticks to hold out ladies' ruffs. But you tremble at his thunder when he settles down to his chapter on dancing. In his "Anatomy of Abuses," published in 1583, he tells us of people who have broke their legs with skipping, leaping and turning. Then he gives us—quite unintentionally, I am sure—one of the raciest descriptions of the Morris I have ever read. Listen to this and see if it does not call up an exhilarating picture to those who, with pleasantly beating hearts, have heard the jingle of the Morris bells:

"Their hobby horses together with their pipers and thundering drummers . . . then march this heathen company towards the Church, their pipers playing, their drummers thundering, their stumps dancing, the bells jingling, their handkerchiefs fluttering about their heads like madde men, dancing and swinging their handkerchiefs over their heads . . . like Devils incarnate."

I call that a fine piece of descriptive writing, though it was inspired by vehement dislike. Another Puritan pen—that of Mr. Prynne—writes thus:

"The way to Heaven is too steep, too narrow for men to dance in. . . . No way is large or smoothe enough for capering roisterers, for jumping, skipping, dancing dames but that broad, beaten, pleasant road that leads to Hell. The Gate of Heaven is too narrow

for Whole Rounds. Men never went as yet by multitudes, much less by Morrice dancing troops to Heaven."

This shows a working knowledge of his subject, for Whole Rounds is a name which would only be known to Morris men. One wonders whether Mr. Prynne himself had danced on the broad, pleasant road.

This vehement dislike of all natural pastimes gained on the spirit of once Merry England. Puritan-minded magistrates set malevolent eyes on the people's amusements. They determined to do that which St. Augustine had left alone. They took to prohibiting Sunday games and sports, and to punishing those who took part in them. There was great opposition however to these new and hated ideas, for presently we find the King interfering on behalf of the people. In 1618 James I. found it necessary to publish a declaration concerning lawful sports, in which the Morris is specially mentioned.

The magistrates were to refrain from meddling with "dancing, either men or women; May games, Whitsunales, *Morris dances* and the setting up of Maypoles, so the same be had in due and convenient time without impediment or neglect of divine Service."

A little later the Cavaliers paid back the Puritans in their own coin. There are many satirical songs upon Roundhead manners, their pleasing methods of destruction, their lack and hatred of education. There is a set of Cavalier playing-cards extant, one of which shows Cromwell himself in the attitude of Tom the Piper, playing pipe and tabor. Behind him comes Fairfax laboriously performing a Morris in the pose of the actor Kemp, whose picture decorated his pamphlet

"The Nine Daies Wonder." This playing-card satire is marked "Cromwell pypeth unto Fairfax," and we may imagine the fury of the Puritan leader when he saw himself depicted as taking part in such a sinful exhibition as a Morris dance!

This saddening Puritan influence, although checked at the Restoration, finally gained the day, and aided by the drifting of the country population into the towns, by the rise of industrial England, by compulsory education, by the coming of the railway, ultimately by the motor-bicycle and the cinema, has succeeded in almost killing this native pearl of price.

Almost, but not quite.

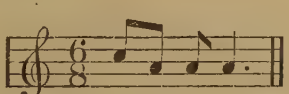
2. Our Own Indifference.

We used to believe we had no native music. Italy had her boasted operas, Germany her *Volkslieder*, Spain her gipsy tunes—poor old England, of course, had nothing. Still more thoroughly, as I have said before, did we believe that we never had and never could produce any dance but the Hornpipe. Yet in old times other people admired us for just that very thing.

Erasmus, the great traveller who spent a long time in England, says: "Britanni, præter alia, formam musicam, et lautas mensas proprie sibi vindicent" [The Britons may take credit to themselves for their music (including dancing) and their well-served tables].

Another foreigner—Hentzner—wrote in 1598: "In saltatione et arte musica excellunt" (In dancing and music they excel).

English gentlemen who could not sing at sight were

considered to be but poorly educated, while our Madrigal writers and other sixteenth and seventeenth century composers could hold their own with any that Europe produced. The names of Byrd, Weelkes, Dowland and Purcell were and are a glory to England. But whenever it was possible to do so we gave away our national music. That old English air of *Constant Billy*, for instance, was given away long since. You can see vigorous Morris dances performed to its lovely variants collected in Cecil Sharp's "Morris Tunes"; you can hear it sung in "The Beggar's Opera" as *Cease your funning;* but for all that it is *The Ashgrove* now, sweetly sentimental, in every collection of Welsh songs, and with Welsh words written to it. In those really funny tomes of Crotch's "Specimens" we find him handing out our English tunes to all and sundry. Anything ending in

he gives instantly to Scotland without further question.

When it comes to dancing, then indeed we have narrowly escaped throwing away our birthright. Of the emigration of our Country dances and their return home Gallicised I will tell you later. Our Morris never left the country, but we were quite ready to pretend it had been brought into it. The few mentions of the latter-day Morris are ignorant and misleading, which of course helped to confuse and retard any accurate knowledge concerning it. I give you a few instances to show you some of the modern cloth which

has been sewn into that tattered cloak we spoke of, and which we must patiently unpick. In Chambers's "Book of Days" you may see a picture of a so-called Morris. What it really shows is this. The figures from the Betley Window have been arranged round the Maypole, each dancing at his own sweet will, and anything more unlike the ordered dignity of a set Morris dance you can hardly imagine.

Chappell, in his delightful "Ballad Literature," purports giving a description of the Morris. But he writes instead of the May Games, which (he says) were instituted in honour of Robin Hood! While describing these, the Morris, like the hobby horse, is quite forgot. He never mentions the form of the dance nor gives the number of dancers correctly, and shows a poor example of a Morris tune, which is now used as a Country dance.

Ditchfield, in his "Old English Customs," completely mixes the Morris with the Country dance. He is writing of the Morris men of Bampton,* and says how pleased he is to find one village at least conserving the old Country dances. "The performers were formed in two lines, the ladies on one side, the gentlemen on the other." They crossed hands down the middle, while all the dancers sang the old ballad of "Bob and Joan." This, of course, is not a Morris at all, but a Country dance. There are no "ladies" in the Bampton Morris, but there is a Morris dance called *Bobby and Joan*. So you see how difficult it is to unravel the truth from such confused writing. I think Mr. Ditchfield probably heard of the Bampton Morris, but when he went to see he found the whole village dancing Country

* See Chapter II.

THE HELSTON FURRY DANCE, 1922.

The dancers dressed all in their best are "bringing in the May." In their progress round the town they have reached a beautiful private garden.

After a photograph by A. H. Hawke, Helston.

dances, and never saw a Morris at all. He took it for granted that what he saw *was* the Morris and wrote this gem of inaccuracy without inquiry.

But far worse is the cursory notice in Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes." He wrote in 1838 when hundreds of villages must still have boasted their side. He undertook to write a book on sports and pastimes, yet never went to see a Morris dance and quotes from other people only.

Douce's "Dissertations" are of far more value than these later notices.

Even in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" of 1911 we find the same well-worn story of the arrival of the Morris on English shores in the time of Edward III.

All this shows how nearly we lost our pearl through our own indifference, ignorance, and apathy. The truth is our Morris (including the Sword dances) is so difficult in technique, so exhausting in practice to an unaccustomed dancer, so restricted in its public appearance, that practically only the chosen and trained Morris men themselves, together with those of their village who might be interested, knew anything about them; neither musician, dancer, nor antiquarian ever suspected the English countryman of possessing and evolving an art of his own.

But I have told you of a great many places where that art lives, and now we have its technique safely down in black and white. We owe the "Morris Book" to that ardent collector of folk song and dance, Cecil Sharp, whose achievement the country by no means fully appreciates as yet.

I said the art was in course of evolution. Every art

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that can be practised with living zest is, I suppose, in process of growth. Certainly the effect of the modern revival of folk-dancing has been not only to quicken the sap of the ancient art, but to make a new shoot of growth. One has only to compare the dancing of a traditional Morris side with that of a newly trained set of young men whose sole motive is the love of dancing, to become aware of the introduction of fresh characteristics. It is a necessary development.

Can these bones live? They can.

The form is the same, but a different spirit moves it.

3. A Short Summary.

Now we will just run over what we have learnt so far, and see if we have managed to sew up our ragged pieces of cloth into something resembling that old cloak we spoke of.

The pre-Christian Seasonal Festivals still exist in England. They have come down to us in four dance forms—Sword dances, Morris, Processionals and Maypole dances (of which I speak next).

The Sword, Morris and Processional dances are indiscriminately called *the Morris*, and the dancers of all three call themselves Morris men.

All three forms show signs of having once been much more than a dance. Some are still attached to a play, some have characters from a play attached to them.

The interest of dance or play centres round an execution. If the execution no longer takes place there are signs that there once has been an execution which is now forgotten. This we recognise as the last survival of the Spring sacrifice.

All the Morris forms show evidence of the performers being or having been disguised. This we take to be a still-existing feeling that they had reason to be so disguised.

The performance is not exactly for pleasure, but is done so that a traditional ceremony may be carried out, and it is in some way mysterious. This idea lives in the minds of the dancers. They are grave, they dress alike, strictly according to their village tradition. They may even be said to regard themselves as somewhat apart from the other villagers who do not know "the rights of the dance." In Derbyshire the Morris men used to say they got the dance from the fairies, thus explaining the feeling of awe or mystery. But I believe the awful feelings and the slight mystery still clinging to the practice are an inheritance from those dreadful days when men went out to kill.

All three forms of Morris are invariably accompanied by a Fool or a man in woman's clothes. This personage is generally called "the Moll," possibly in memory of Maid Marian, who once for a short time in the life of the ceremony (about two hundred years) accompanied the dancers. In this petticoated or otherwise decorated character we think we see *either* the representation of a mysterious being—"the May" or the god of vegetation himself, *or* the King-priest who had to sacrifice or be sacrificed.

The Spring dances spread over the first six months of the year, beginning, as we saw, at Abbots Bromley, with Twelfth Night and the Plough Monday Morrises, and ending properly about Midsummer at the time of the Beltane Fires. The harvest rites, of which I have

told you nothing at all, carry on the year's festivities. Common to all of our dancing ceremonies is the idea of "luck." To do it is lucky, to leave it undone might bring bad fortune. Everyone is anxious to take home something for luck, be it a bough, a garland or a crumb of cake. In this we see a relic of that ancient and terrible custom of cutting up the dead god and each man trying to possess himself of a bit for the good of his house and fields. Finally we see that these Spring festivals are common to Europe as well as to England, and we believe them to be natives of the soils on which they appear.

I do hope that ragged and tattered cloak is now taking on a rather better shape?

But we still have not come to *Jacob Hall's Jig*.

CHAPTER VII

1. Differences Between Country Dances and the Morris.

English Country dances are the gayest and generally the simplest of dances. The Morris is for practised dancers who have every movement of arms and legs strictly taught them by their foreman. The Country dance is for anybody who wishes for a little amusement and exercise. As long as you get into your right place you may do pretty well what steps you please.

The object of the Morris is the performance of a

THE TRADITIONAL HORN DANCERS OF ABBOT'S BROMLEY, STAFFS.
The mysterious man in petticoats should be particularly noticed.

rite; the object of the Country dance is the pleasure of dancing.

The Morris demands an audience; the Country dance existing for the dancers' own delectation gets on better without one.

The Morris is strictly for men; the Country dance is enjoyed by a lad and his lass—equally by a gentleman and his lady.

The Morris remains what it has always been, a dance of the country side *in* the country; the Country dance paradoxically has been to Court.

Yet the Country dance is partly descended from the primal figures of the Morris, as I suppose all dancing is descended from primitive religious dancing. It bears a few marks of its ancestry still. The serpentine figure occurs in almost every dance, the circle is constantly trodden. Certain other figures occur which have their counterpart in the ancient dance; the casting off in pairs —a figure from the Sleights Sword dance—is faithfully repeated in a Country dance called *The Bonny, Bonny Broom*. The roll under double swords, again from Sleights, finds itself repeated in the roll under clasped hands in *Grimstock*. But the spirit is entirely different. The spirit of a country dance is enjoyment *pur et simple*, and if not pure and simple then the true spirit of the dance is spoiled.

Its beginnings have no date. It must have grown with the growth of the nation. I can hardly picture Anglo-Saxons, so busy fighting and labouring, dancing a Country dance, but I can easily visualise an Early English—a *very* Early English knight leading out his straight-robed lady. The oldest type of Country dance

is undoubtedly the *Round*, and that is because a round is not only the simplest figure there can be, but because it formed in some sort a little Spring Festival in itself.

Round what? Why, round a Maypole, of course.

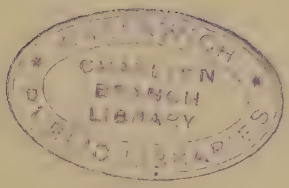
2. Maypoles and Maypole Dances.

Here we work back very quickly down the genealogical tree of the Country dance to its root. Besides the great god of Spring and of vegetation there were innumerable little gods—or perhaps the pervasion of the great god when applied by ignorant folk to individual growths peopled each of those growths with a presiding spirit of its own. Certainly every tree had its spirit living in it, and responsible for its fruit. Therefore, of course, each of these tree-spirits must be propitiated or the tree would not bear.

Back we come again to that underlying motive—Hunger-fear.

What a terrible burden this dread of starvation must have been! So of course people put out offerings for their tree-spirits, and when they saw the leaves bursting on a beautiful May Day, they would take hands and dance for joy round the tree. So closely are the emotions woven together that Joy can follow quickly upon the heels of Fear.

This dancing round trees was a widespread custom. It stretched from Sweden to the South of France most certainly. There is a delightful picture in a book in the Bibliothèque Nationale of France, showing peasants in the dress of about 1400 dancing in a ring round a


CHELTEN
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FIFTEENTH-CENTURY PEASANTS DANCING ROUND A LIVING MAYPOLE

The dance is probably a "carole." This picture is from a prayer-book in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

cherry-tree in fruit. It is called "*Une Ronde* at the May feasts," so it must be quite a Southern scene for the cherry-tree to have fruited so early. Then, as people could not carry fruit-trees about with them, they made a pole to represent a tree and set it up in a convenient place for dancing. Every Spring they decorated it with fresh green boughs that it might more closely resemble a tree. You will remember how the Helston people go out to gather greenery still, and how they tell us they are out "*for to fetch the Summer home O!*"

In the same way the people of Castleton go out the evening before their Procession and stay out all night gathering flowers and oak for the Garland. At Abney near by they do the same thing, and indeed all over England. We are by no means original in a desire to bring home an English May. The rite has gone on through untold ages and in many a country.

In far-off ancient Greece where the agriculturists danced in rings on circular dancing-floors, these wanderings in the woods were part of several cults.

Those women I told you of, who put horns upon their heads, went out to seek their infant god Dionysus in the woods and on the hills. Sometimes they found him in his cradle, the new, or rather the re-newed god of the vine and vegetation, and in triumph they carried in their "May."

That mysterious old Phrygian god, the son of Cybele the great Earth-Mother, died once a year and was sought all through a Spring night, his devotees wandering in companies through the woods. They would cut down a young pine-tree and decorate it with violets. An effigy of this god Atys (or in very early times a

living representation of him) was then bound to the tree and this human Maypole was carried into the city.

These wanderings in the woods seem to be an integral part of the Spring ceremonies.

> "*There's not a budding boy or girle this day*
> *But is got up, and gone to bring in May*,"

says Herrick, and we have a beautiful May Carol handed down to us, though now showing signs of Puritan interference. The last verse, however, tells us that what Hellenic women did five centuries before Christ, that do English boys and girls still.

The May Carol.

The moon shines bright and the stars give light
A little before the day.
Our Heavenly Father called to us
And bid us wake and pray.

Awake, awake, oh pretty, pretty maid,
Out of your drowsy dream,
And step into your dairy below
And fetch us a bowl of cream.

If not a bowl of your sweet cream
A mug of your brown beer,
For the Lord knows where we shall meet again
To be maying another year.

Oh, we've been rambling all this night
And sometime of this day;
And now returning home again
We bring you in the May!

Maypoles and Maypole Dances

Do you know that Maypoles once stood in the very heart of London? St. Andrew Undershaft took its curious name from the immense pole beside it which dwarfed the spire of the church. Pope writes:

> "*Where the tall Maypole once o'erlooked the Strand*";

and there it stood, save for a short eclipse during the Commonwealth, until London grew too sophisticated to need it, and it was given to Sir Isaac Newton to adjust his great telescope.

But long before then the Puritans had been shouting against the poor old Maypoles. Master Stubbs—who called dancing a "pestiferous vice"—was one who shouted the loudest, you may be sure, and with his gift of vivid description he gives us a delightful picture of the bringing in of the Maypole. He begins with the night ramblings, which he portrays with bitter enmity. He tells how the village people spend the night in the woods and fields, he tells how the great pole is brought in, how the villagers decorate it with boughs and garlands and ribbons, how they leap and dance about it "as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idols, whereof this is a perfect pattern, or rather the thing itself."

The thing itself! But you know he is entirely right. The pole represents a tree, the tree represents the spirit living in it, and the spirit represents the greater god of vegetation under whatever name you choose to call him. Remember Atys who *was* a Maypole. Another Puritan writer says: "This day shall be erected long wooden idols called Maypoles" (May Day, 1623).

When I read this I do not altogether blame those worthy Puritans, for no doubt there were many abuses and much horse-play and bad behaviour around the Maypoles, as indeed the following lines acknowledge. Also fundamentally they were right and the Maypole *was* a "long wooden idol"! This description of the poor old thing always reminds me of those wooden poles called the Asherah, which the Children of Israel persistently set up and worshipped. They even made dresses for them, so they must have been something like Maypoles decked in ribbons!

This is what the Maypole is supposed to say about itself:

> "*I have a mighty retinue,*
> *The scum of all the rascal crew. . . .*
> *Of thieves and scapethrifts many a one*
> *With bouncing Bess and Jolly Joan.*
> *With idle boys and journeymen*
> *And vagrants that their country run.*
> *Yea, hobby horse doth hither prance,*
> *Maid Marian and Morris dance.*
> *My summons fetcheth far and near*
> *All that can swagger, roar and swear,*
> *All that can dance and drab and drink*
> *They run to me as to a sink!*"

It does not make a pretty picture, does it? We would prefer to keep our fancies of the lasses and lads getting leave of their dads and hieing to the Maypole on the village green. But there are always two sides to everything and always someone ready to speak ill of old institutions. They did just the same in the days of

old Greece. Plutarch complains that people were no longer satisfied with the simplicity of the Maypole, but wanted something grander. "In ancient days," he says, "our fathers used to keep the feast of Dionysus in homely, jovial fashion. There was a procession, a jar of wine and *a branch*."

The parish authorities by no means disdained the Maypole and the Church looked upon it with a kindlier eye than the Puritan party. We learn from those prosaic yet entertaining mines of information, churchwardens' accounts, that the pole, like the Morris, was even allowed inside the church sometimes. We read from the accounts of St. Edmund's, Sarum, 1490: "*To Willm Belrynger for clensinge of the Churche at ye Dawnse of Powles 8d.*"

At Reading: "*Item pay'd for felling and bringing home of the bough*" (1504).

And again at Reading, 1529: "*To the carpenter to make a ladder of the maypole and for his mete and drynk 18d.*"

If this entry had been of a later date I should have said they had a strict Vicar with new Puritan ideas, and were getting rid of the poor old thing altogether, but as it occurs in 1529 I expect they had a new pole and were economically making the best use they could of the old one.

The Maypoles all came down after an enactment of the Long Parliament, 1644, when Puritan ideas were reaching their zenith. It reads thus:

". . . and because the profanation of the Lord's Day hath been heretofore greatly occasioned by Maypoles (a heathenish vanity) . . . all and singular Maypoles that

are or shall be erected, shall be taken down and removed."

But up they all went again when Charles Stuart came home, for *there is nothing harder to kill than tradition.* That it is still alive you will acknowledge when you hear of a rite practised yearly in certain country places. In his "Folk Songs from Somerset" Cecil Sharp gives an interesting account of the ceremony as it is performed in West Somerset. The people who take part go to the orchard on January 17th. They dip a piece of toast in cider and put it into the fork of an apple-tree. They form a circle and dance round the tree singing:

"Old Apple-tree, we'll wassail thee
And hoping thou wilt bear;
The Lord does know where we shall be
To be merry another year.
To blow well and to bear well
And so merry let us be;
Let every man drink up his cup
And Health to the old Apple-tree!"

The company then shouts, "Apples now, hatfulls, capfulls, three bushel bagfulls, tallets ole fulls, barnsfloorfulls, little heap under the stairs!" Then they give a cheer, stamp, shout and fire off guns.

Whom is the toast for? Why, for the tree-sprite who lives in the tree and makes the apples grow big and ripe, or little and sour if he does not get his propitiatory offering.

Why do they stamp and shout? For the one reason, the same old forgotten reason—they want to wake up the god of vegetation that he may give his increase.

In Surrey they desire that

"*Every little twig*
Bear an apple big,
Every little bough
Bear an apple now!"

While in Kent the usual invocation begins—

"*Stand fast, root;*
Bear well, top."

I tell you all this here rather than in its proper place amongst the Morris and Spring processionals, because Maypole dances live in the form of Country dances. I imagine they were so delightful to dance that they remained in favour after the Maypoles themselves had vanished, which happened early in the nineteenth century, I grieve to say. When Ditchfield compiled his "Old English Customs" he mentioned six places where they were still standing, and Washington Irving saw some, to his great joy, when he came to England early in the eighteen hundreds. One stood on the banks of the Dee near Chester, and he says: "I shall never forget the delight I felt on first seeing a Maypole."

The best-known Maypole dance is perhaps *Sellenger's Round, or The Beginning of the World.* We know it to have been one not only by its formation, but by allusions to it in old works and ballads, such as "dancing of Sellenger's Round in Moonshine nights about Maypoles."

The well-known "Come, lasses and lads," which I have mentioned before, shows us this very dance about

the Maypole. When they begin to call the tune—the invariable method of choosing a dance—we find:

"'*Begin,' says Hal.* '*Aye, aye,' says Mall,*
'*We'll lead up Packington's Pound:*'
'*No, no,' says Moll and so says Doll,*
'*We'll first have Sellenger's Round.*'"

There is also an old woodcut to be seen on a "Garland" of songs, showing men and women round a Maypole with the inscription thereon, "Hey for Sellenger's Round."

Contemporary with these sort of allusions we find it mentioned as a Country dance only, quite apart from the Maypole.

Another beautiful dance, obviously intended for the Maypole, is *Gathering Peascods.*

This is delightful to watch and still more delightful to dance. A great ring swings round (in the sun's track, of course) and breaks into twirling units, joins up again and swings back in the opposite direction. A little ring of men spins round in the centre, followed by a similar little ring of women. In then dash the men and meet in the middle with a resounding and exciting clap of the raised hands. This is copied by their partners, who run in as the men run out, making a beautiful alternating movement and never destroying the shape of the ring. We are told that the meeting and clapping in the centre is a relic of that necessity of touching the object of worship. The Maypole was once a live tree, you remember, so quite possibly the devotees wished to touch the trunk and perhaps break off a leaf or two for luck.

"GATHERING PEASCODS."

A Round Country Dance performed by members of the English Folk Dance Society. This is, no doubt, a Maypole dance without a Maypole.

BRANCH

A remarkable thing about these Rounds is the moving of the ring towards the left first. You will remember that Sword dances and the Morris rounds show the same peculiarity, and that it appears to be the same in folk-dances of other nations also. I quote here more of that interesting passage from H. G. Wells' "Outline of History":

"Certain things appear in the mythology of mankind again and again. Neolithic man was enormously impressed by serpents and he no longer took the sun for granted. Nearly everywhere that Neolithic culture went, there went a disposition to associate the sun and serpents in decoration and in worship."

This treading of the circle from right to left seems to be caused by some deep-seated instinct. Children do it in their circle games such as *Oats and Beans and Barley*, which, by the way, includes stamping and clapping, and appears to be a children's imitation of a Spring Tree dance; and in *Round and round the Mulberry Bush*, and indeed in all circle games.

Circles used in primitive handwork, such as stretching the warp, grinding corn between stones or stirring a pudding all follow the same rule. To do otherwise would spoil the work; the pudding will be heavy, and the farmer whose grindstone disobeys this law will have bad luck with his corn.

CHAPTER VIII

1. Country Dances at Court.

Country dances were by no means despised by the upper classes. They went to Court. The fashion was to first walk through the stately Pavanes and Sarabandes, then to step the lively Branles and Galliardes, and to finish the evening with Country dances. This fashion lasted for about three hundred years, the Minuet presently taking the place of the Pavane.

On her first marriage (1501) Katherine of Aragon witnessed a grand pageant in which the performers flocked off a great ship on wheels and twenty-four of them danced "*goodly roundels and divers figures.*" This—most disappointingly—is the earliest mention I can find of a recognisable Country dance. Plantagenet Royalties constantly danced, but what they danced we cannot learn. There are many pictures to be seen of ladies in gorgets and wimples, and gentlemen with long toes turning up and long liripipes hanging down, dancing together. There is one such in the Bodleian Library dated about 1340, called "Musicians and audience." But I should alter this to "Musicians and Dancers." The three prominent figures are in the position of that part of the *Triumph* where two men lead a lady up the middle of the dance.

People seemed to be just as fond of dancing in the evenings then as they are now. They used to jump up after supper and call for "A hall, a hall!" Then the

servants would come in and brush aside the rushes which strewed the floor and so make room for a dance.

We know that Chaucer's Parish Clerk, Absolon, was a great adept. He could dance in twenty different ways in the Oxford manner:

> "*After the Schole of Oxenforde tho,*
> *And with his legges casten to and fro.*"

This sounds as though his steps were exceptionally nimble and varied. The Apprentice in the "Cook's Tale" was another devotee of the dance, for—

> "*At every Brideale would he synge and hoppe!*"

We have many proofs of the ancient practice of rounds—people dancing Christmas Carols in a ring, and May dances round trees or Maypoles; and we have a dance tune of about 1300 as well as that most enchanting of Spring songs "Summer is icumen in," which would have made an excellent Country dance tune. But it is not until the days of Queen Elizabeth that we hear of particular dances by their names. She not only approved her courtiers' dancing, but danced herself until she became too old and stiff. Sir James Melville, the shrewd Scottish Ambassador, says the Queen danced "high and disposedly," and in the picture of Her Majesty performing a Galliarde with the Earl of Leicester, you can see her doing it. So high does she dance that her partner has lifted her three feet off the floor!

Her Maids of Honour naturally followed her example. *The Cushion dance* was a great favourite with them and *Trenchmore*. In the former the leading man placed a

cushion before the lady he wished to dance with, she in turn took the cushion and laid it before a man; the dancers and the musician sang a line or two, quaintly remarking that the lady under the name of Joan Sanderson—

> "*Must come to, she shall come to,*
> *She must come whether she will or no!*"*

Out she had to come, till all the company was afoot, when they danced in two concentric circles round a chair on which the leading man sat upon the cushion! It sounds rather childlike to us, but people were more ready to be pleased with simple pastimes then, and, besides, the dance was punctuated with ceremonious kisses as each lady was presented with the cushion!

When the Maids were in their own quarters out of sight of the old Queen's hawk-like eyes, they cast off Court manners. Poor Sir Francis Knollys had his room next to the Maids' dormitory and a terrible time he had with them. "The Mayds of Honour used to frisk and *hey about* in the next room to his extreme disquiet at nights, though he had often warned them of it."

Finally he obtained peace by appearing in their midst as a spectre, reading a book and carrying a light. He promenaded thus for a long time and afterwards we hear no more of their heying about.

In the reign of James I. we learn that "none but Country dances" must be used at Court. This was to please the young brothers and sisters of Buckingham who had come up from the country to share the

* This rhyme still lives in various children's games, changed into "Naughty Miss, she won't come out."

favourite's fortunes, and who did not know the French Court dances. Buckingham himself was an accomplished dancer. When crusty old James showed temper on one occasion and struck terror into the hearts of his courtiers, the favourite "sprang forward, cutting a score of lofty and minute capers with much grace and agility," and put His Majesty into a good temper again.

We frequently read of the *lofty* dancing of the English people. Châteaubriand writes of Anne Boleyn: "She likewise danced the English dances, leaping and jumping with infinite grace and agility." They might show off thus at Court, but the country people were not far behind. A ballad of early Stuart days says:

> "*Lately I went to a Masque at Court*
> *Where I saw dances of every sort;*
> *There they did dance with time and measure,*
> *But none like a Country dance for pleasure.*
> *They did dance as in France,*
> *Not in the English lofty manner.*"

This seems to show that Buckingham's score of lofty and minute capers were the exception at Court though usual in rural England.

Another ballad, called by the charming name of "Under the Greenwood Tree," bears out this:

> "*From head to foot she holds him to't*
> *And jumps as high as he;*
> *Oh how they do spring it, flounce it and fling it,*
> *Under the greenwood tree.*"

The style of dancing must have approached much closer to that of the Morris, where dancers delight in high

springs and bounds. Nothing of the sort is done nowadays, nor do I see how the music allowed it.

We get two more amusing glimpses of Country dances at Court in Stuart times.

Seldon in his "Table Talk" says:

"The Court is much altered. . . . At a solemn dancing you had the grave measures, then the Corantos and the Galliardes, and this kept up with ceremony, and at length to Trenchmore and the Cushion Dance . . . so in Queen Elizabeth's time gravity and state were kept up. In King James' time things were pretty well, but in King Charles' time there has been nothing but Trenchmore and the Cushion Dance, omnium gatherum, tolly polly, hoite come toite."

Then when the second Charles came to his own again Mr. Pepys went to Court. On the last day of the year 1662 he stood in the crowd to watch the Royalties dance. First he saw a Branle, then a single Coranto. "Then to Country dances, the King leading the first which he called for, which was, says he, 'Cuckolds all awry,' the old dance of England." The more elegant sub-title of this little square for four is "*Hey, boys, up go we!*" and what King Charles asked for is still a favourite with present-day dancers. Mr. Pepys does not actually mention who the King honoured as his partner, but the ladies who danced were the well-known Court favourites, Lady Castlemaine and others.

2. Dancing to Ballads.

It was once a common practice to sing for Country dancing. When instruments were scarce and very expensive, dancers were glad to furnish their own music

and used for this purpose the songs they knew. Afterwards, the musicians who played such country instruments as the bagpipe, and later the fiddle, would use the same tunes, so that they became established as dance tunes and very often the words were forgotten. Almost every Country dance we now use is set to a ballad tune, and consequently is called by the name of the ballad. *Newcastle*, for instance, is danced to the tune of a charming song beginning "Came ye not from Newcastle?" *The Bonny, Bonny Broom* is so called from a long, pathetic old ditty about the girl who wished she was at home again amongst the broom of Cowden Knowes, milking her daddy's ewes, while *Dargason* comes from a very ancient title "Donkin Dargason," and has as secondary title "The Mery Ballet of the Hawthorn Tre."

From this practice of dancing to ballad or ballet tunes comes the modern use of the word *ballet*. It need not have a French pronunciation unless you choose.

Dargason, besides being a merry ballet, is one of the oldest types of the Country dance. The performers stand in one straight line, and work up and down this line, never deviating from it except to form the curves of an elongated hey. As I have shown you, Rounds are no doubt the primitive form, these evolved into the square form, and lastly came the "Longways for as many as will."

It is in this form only that the Country dance is known in our villages to-day—*Bricks and Mortar*, for instance, danced in a Wiltshire village; *The Triumph*, danced by King Edward with his Sandringham tenantry; and that evergreen example still found at children's

parties, *Sir Roger de Coverley*. It is a mystery why this dance of all others should remain more or less in fashion. It is not so interesting, nor so beautiful, nor so amusing as many another; it is very tiring when a great number stand up; and the tune being in $\frac{9}{4}$ time is not so generally liked nor so easy in rhythm as others. It probably accommodated itself, however, to the dancing masters' elegancies, which much influenced the Country dances of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

3. Country Dances in Ballrooms.

When the Country dance appeared in ballrooms it could not of necessity be frisked nor flounced through with the somewhat loutish abandon of the village green. Decorum, elegance, poise and dignity were taught. It would not have been possible for Charles II., for instance, in his huge periwig, flapping laced breeches and those clumsy high heels, to have dashed through the figures. Still less could the hooped and powdered ladies in the Bath Pump Room—where still hangs Beau Nash's admonition that no lady having "gone down the dance" shall be so impolite as to leave it at the bottom—have sprung it, capered and flung it as did the rustics beneath the greenwood tree.

I should like to see the revived Country dances performed in a ballroom with more deference to their surroundings. People in evening dress, although they are not now hampered by hoop nor periwig, do not care to heat themselves unduly, nor do ladies care to spoil their costumes by wearing flat shoes instead of the elegant evening shoe proper to the occasion. Yet the absurdly

quick tempo at which the music is invariably played makes the risk of a sprained foot a real danger if clad in an evening shoe. Men complain that their dress-coats are pulled out of shape on the shoulders, and although frequently invited to wear flannels, they naturally do not care to appear so unsuitably clad amongst ladies in pretty evening dresses. I think this is one of the obstacles to a real revival of our own dances, and I cannot believe that the beautiful figures were ever intended to be galloped through at the pace set by the revivalists.

Another thing to be avoided is the crowded programme we are now supposed to dance through. When people meet at a ball they surely like to sit out between the dances, otherwise there is no opportunity for conversing with one's partners and friends. A ball is usually an elegant social occasion. Why must the dancing of Country dances turn it into a dishevelled, perspiring affair? Country dances naturally are far more strenuous than modern dances, and the usual sitting-out time is needed for rest if not for conversation. I wish hostesses could be persuaded to introduce Country dances into their ball programmes. People would then see them under the usual ballroom conditions, and one would imagine that even the most inveterate one-stepper would turn with relief to an occasional Square or "Longways for as many as will."

4. English Country Dances Abroad.

We have never run such danger of altogether losing our Country dances as we ran with the Morris, firstly because although for a long time they have not been

fashionable, yet they have never been forgotten. They have been dormant in the memories of thousands of people who once enjoyed them, while the Morris was shut away in the memories of a handful. Secondly, because we possess in "The Dancing Master" a safe repository for both figures and tunes.

This work contains literally hundreds of dances. The first edition, compiled and edited by John Playford, appeared in 1650, just at the moment when one might have supposed dancing was at a low ebb under the stern eyes of Roundhead Ministers and Puritan magistrates. Nevertheless, it sold so well that edition after edition was published, and these continued during the next hundred years. This in itself is proof of the extraordinary popularity of the dances.

And this popularity was not confined to England. Our dances took a trip abroad! They travelled to the Netherlands and to Denmark, they went to Germany and to Paris. One tune, *Buttered Pease* (known to us better as *The Cobbler's Jig*), got as far as Rome, and as *Piselli al burro* was gaily danced by Italians.

Horace Walpole, in a letter dated 1740, writes: "Italians are fond to a degree of our Country dances"; while the Marquis de Grammont, writing in Paris, says: "*On quitta les danses françaises pour se mettre aux contredanses*" (They left off the French dances and began the Country dances).

When they came home again they were treated very shabbily. Always ready to prefer foreign goods to our own makes, we refused to recognise their English birth. They received instead a great welcome as the newest thing from Paris, and our old square Country dance

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"NEWCASTLE."

A Square Country Dance to the tune of an old ballad. Performed on the bank of the Avon by members of the English Folk Dance Society (*page 79*).

became a set of Quadrilles. Even that figure known to Neolithic culture was now *La Chaine Anglaise*. In *La Monferrine*, accepted as a Swiss folk-dance at the Fête des Vignerons, and danced to a Swiss folk-song, I find the direction "Pas de Polka, ou Chaine Anglaise, main droite à votre voisine pour commencer." In other words, "A handed Hey. Men give their right hands first to the woman on their left."

Yet while we hastened to acclaim our own productions as a new fashion from Paris, Frenchmen acknowledged their origin frankly. In a "Recueil de Contredanses" as early as 1706 we read: "Les Anglais en sont les premiers inventeurs" (The English are the first inventors of them).

While one Englishman at least understood what he was writing about, when Weaver in his "History of Dancing" (1712) said: "Country dances are a dancing the peculiar growth of this nation, though now transplanted into almost all the Courts of Europe."

But it was a little later than these writers—when the Country dance came home again—that we showed ourselves so blind to our own possessions.

We need not bear our neighbours a grudge for the use of the word *contredanse*, for it is generally now agreed that this is a correct translation of the English counter-dance, now corrupted into Country dance; that is, a dance in which either couples stand opposite or counter to each other, or in which the man stands counter to his partner. An extraordinary thing about the "new" Quadrilles is, that when they arrived unfashionable people were still dancing their old Country dances unperturbed by the latest mode. In Hardy's "Under

the Greenwood Tree" the company at the Tranters' Christmas party danced "that most delightful of Country dances, beginning with six-hands-round," while Miss Podsnap, you will recollect, was compelled to walk through a set of Quadrilles amongst the furniture of her papa's drawing-room in "London—Londres—London"—at very much the same date.

Chappell speaks of "those dances danced in the *modern* way" which are described as "Longways for as many as will," and we know that this is the form in which they live in villages if they are alive at all. I therefore conclude that no relationship was observed between the bastard Quadrille and its legitimate sister, the latter being seen in her Longways dress only. As early as the ball days of Miss Burney's Evelina only the Longways form was danced at Assemblies, while by 1818 the Quadrille and the Country dance are spoken of together as if they were entirely different dances.

The first Quadrille was danced at Almack's celebrated Assembly in Waterloo year. Lady Jersey introduced it with great éclat, and we have an amusing picture of the performers in the midst of the "Ladies' Chain"—oh! poor old Neolithic Hey! One gentleman seizes a moment *en passant* to kiss a lady's hand, and all are executing some complicated steps. Indeed, each figure had its own steps and its own name, such as L'Eté, La Poule, etc. Then people, growing indolent, would not take the trouble to learn these steps, but simply walked through the figures. The coming of the crinoline helped the decadent movement, and by 1850 the Country dance had become "The Lancer Quadrilles." The bastard itself is dead now, its last

kick being the mad career of those Lancers which ended in the kitchen.

5. Courting Dances.

I have tried to show that fear was the moving factor in the beginnings of Spring dances—fear of coming starvation. In the Maypole dances we find joy overcoming fear; but in the later and more sophisticated forms of Country dance another motive altogether is brought into play—love. Food was to be had regularly and people had outgrown their dread of hunger; they danced with very different feelings and found in the dance plenty of good occasions for courtship. It taught polite manners, for one thing; the man must hand his partner elegantly across the figure, he must learn to bow and she to return a graceful curtsey. That particular dances lend themselves to courtship we can soon see. I quote again from that delicious book of Hardy's, "Under the Greenwood Tree." "The Country dance called the *Triumph* or *Follow my Lover* was the figure. . . . Mr. Shinar, according to the interesting rule laid down, deserted his own partner and made off down the middle with this fair one of Dick's, the pair appearing from the top of the room like two persons tripping down a lane to be married. Dick trotted behind . . . with a rather silly expression, implying that such an elopement could not be tolerated. They turned and came back, when Dick . . . blushed with ingenuous ardour as he joined hands with his rival and formed the arch over his lady's head."

This pretty scene was unfortunately followed by a display of stubborn temper on the part of Mr. Shinar.

He refused to "cast off." "Perhaps I shan't cast off for any man," was the actual expression of that truculent farmer. And he did not.

Again we find this new motive appearing very clearly in *Pickadilla, or the New Bopeep*, one of John Playford's dances. The files turn sideways and the ladies trip across the floor, followed in the next phrase by all the men, who proceed to peep flirtatiously over their partners' shoulders, hoping to catch a dart from a pair of bright eyes! Although *Pickadilla* is included in the very first edition of "The Dancing Master," it strikes a stagey and artificial note, and compared to the joyous austerity of *Sellengers' Round* makes us feel that the Country dance had travelled a long road already.

Side by side with the grown-ups' dances, of course, we find the children acting their own ideas in their own dancing-songs. Could there be a prettier little game of love and marriage than that played across the gutter in the old streets of Guildford?

> "*Rosy apple, lemon or pear,*
> *Bunch of roses she shall wear;*
> *Gold and silver by her side,*
> *I know who will be the bride.*"

And the next verse exhorts the little bridegroom to—

> "*Give her kisses, one two three,*
> *She's Mrs. Cole's daughter!*"

Then there is that far better known game we used to play about the girl who sprinkled ashes in a pan on All Hallows' E'en in order to find out who her husband was to be. This gives in a nutshell the great things of a village girl's life while the ring moves round the actors,

"MY LADY CULLEN."

A Country Dance performed by Bristol members of the English Folk Dance Society. This form is called "Longways for as many as will" (*page* 83).

CHARLTON
BRANCH

"*Sally, Sally Water, sprinkle in the pan;*
Rise, Sally—rise, Sally, for a young man.
Stand upright upon your feet
And choose the one you love so sweet."

Then the circling chorus carries Miss Sally Water a little further on her life's journey. They proceed to sing:

"*Now you're married we wish you joy,*
First a girl and then a boy.
Seven years after son and daughter.
Pray, young couple, come kiss together;"

whereupon two new actors appear in the ring, and in the characters of Sally's children affectionately embrace. How often I have danced this game with due solemnity, and how shy I used to feel when the moment came to rise for a young man!

Now that you have got as far as this last paragraph, there still remains a most important thing for you to do. Please go at once and see our dances actually being danced. How flat my written descriptions will seem when you hear the jingle of the Morris bells, the exhilarating thud of the upright capers; when you see the swinging handkerchiefs and hear the clash of the sticks. A Sword dance, too, will cause you to catch your breath with a joyous anxiety, and *Jacob Hall's Jig*, to which we have come at length by devious ways, will give you such fidgets that you will long to spring out of your chair and join in. Then will you feel as indignantly impatient with that cocksure lady as I did.

Swedish? No. Pure English.

An English Country dance drawn from the stores kept safely for us in "The English Dancing Master,"

first edited by that old Englishman, "Honest John Playford," an English Country dance, descendant of the age-old Nature dance, sprung from those very figures known to prehistoric men; danced to a tune which will make your toes curl up and your eyes sparkle; a goodly heritage from our own old England. I cannot but think that one day soon we shall realise the riches we possess. Then shall we wonder at the long hours we have spent slipping and sliding, walking and sauntering with spiritless feet up and down a ballroom to the syncopated beat of tuneless clamour; then shall we remember we were once the "dancing English who carried a fair presence."

We are still the dancing English. We can beat other nations hollow. We never see such classical dancing competitions, such organised displays abroad. We take to it still like ducks to water; but oh! what miserable material we use in our ballrooms!

Let us send foreign goods back to their negro originators; then, purged of their paralysing influence, we may come at last once more to see "there's none like a Country dance for pleasure."

The Triumph

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